

# Trends in Buddhist Studies Amongst Western Scholars

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Compiled by Michael S. Drummond

**THE NECESSITY FOR  
PROMOTING BUDDHISM IN  
EUROPE**

**Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi**

**German Dharmaduta Society  
2000**

3048

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## A Message from the President

The Lord Buddha's words ' Do not become discouraged and give up, and do not rest satisfied with partial achievements ' was ingrained in the blood of Asoka Weeraratna whom I knew from my childhood. In the 1950's Asoka Weeraratna went around the country seeking assistance and collecting funds for the purpose of establishing the Buddha Sasana in Germany and the purchase of 'Das Buddhistisches Haus' in Berlin. Our house located beyond Galle although far away from Colombo was frequently visited by him. My parents were very happy to encourage and support him in his endeavours to promote Buddhism in Europe by establishing initially the Berlin Buddhist Vihara.

Asoka Weeraratna's timing for this venture was opportune as he founded the German Dharmaduta Society in 1952 and sent the first Buddhist Mission to Germany in 1957, when the third phase of Buddhism in Europe as described by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi was about to begin. During this phase the German Dharmaduta Society played a very important role.

After the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a new and young management is now steering the German Dharmaduta Society. We hope to move energetically to promote Buddhism in Europe as we enter the Third Millennium. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's contribution and his guidance are vital in sorting out the complex problems and mapping out the strategies we will have to adopt in the coming years.

We realise that Buddhism has to be presented in Europe in terms that are acceptable to Europeans and not in terms that the traditional Sri Lankan Dharmadutas would like to give. It should be done in the native language of the potential recipients of the Buddha Dhamma. Meditation and the principle of 'cause and effect' have to play a major role in presenting Buddhism to Europeans.

It was a fitting tribute to the late Asoka Weeraratna (Ven. Mitirigala Dhammanisanthi Thero) to have commemorated his first death anniversary with a Public Seminar under the heading ' The Necessity for Promoting Buddhism in Europe ' which educated everyone of us on how to guide our mission in Berlin in the new millennium. We will be continually seeking the advice and guidance of Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi and other learned monks who are familiar with the European scenario.

Dr. Granville Dharmawardena  
President  
German Dharmaduta Society  
August 17, 2000

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## A Message from the Hony. Secretary

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Asoka Weeraratna on his visits to Europe nearly half a century ago discovered a void and deep disillusionment among Western people with their traditional religious beliefs, and a longing for an alternate and more meaningful spiritual path. He saw an immense potential for Buddhism in Europe, particularly in Germany, and was convinced that the prevailing conditions in that country in the aftermath of a terrible massacre in World War Two, were ideally suited to receiving the gentle doctrine of the Buddha via a Buddhist Mission from Sri Lanka. Asoka Weeraratna's overall aim was to establish the Buddha Sasana in Germany as Arahant Mahinda had done it in Sri Lanka over 2,300 years ago. Asoka's energetic work upon his return to Sri Lanka, led to the founding of the German Dharmaduta Society, the establishment of the Berlin Buddhist Vihara and thereafter the regular despatch of Dhammadutas, to reside in the Vihara and spread the Dhamma in Europe.

Today, a part of Asoka's vision has been realized. Buddhism is now very much a part of the Western scene. A sizeable number of people in several parts of Europe have understood the Buddha's Message and embraced it. A Western monastic Sangha born out of European soil now exists. Yet a lot remains to be done in terms of promoting Buddhism as a spiritual path to weather life's troubles, in the unreached areas of Europe.

Ever since the revered German monk Ven. Nyanatiloka Maha Thero began residing at the Island Hermitage in Dodanduwa in 1911, Sri Lanka has had the good fortune of attracting a dedicated band of Western Buddhists to our shores. The names of Nyanatiloka, Nyanaponika, Nyanasatta, Nyanamoli, Anagarika Sugatananda ( Francis Story ), Vappo among others, illumine the Buddhist landscape with their excellent exposition of the Dhamma and great literary contributions. They brought fresh perspectives and produced a wealth of translations of Buddhist texts from Pali into several other languages. These scholarly endeavours have played a substantial role in stimulating Western interest in Buddhism.

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi belongs to this line of illustrious Western monks. As the President and Editor of the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Bhikkhu Bodhi carries the mantle once borne by his erstwhile guru the late Ven. Nyanaponika Maha Thero, with steadfastness and dedication. The Internet provides a glimpse into the wide range of Bhikkhu Bodhi's literary output. He was singularly honoured recently for his outstanding services to the

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dissemination of Buddhism, by being invited to be the Principal speaker at the United Nations, New York this year on the occasion of the declaration of Vesak as a day of International Religious Significance.

Bhikkhu Bodhi's keynote address on the topic ' The Necessity for Promoting Buddhism in Europe ' delivered at a Public Seminar held on July 2, 2000 at the Mahaweli Centre Auditorium in Colombo, to commemorate the first death anniversary of Ven. Mitirigala Dhammanisanthi Thero ( formerly Asoka Weeraratna ), was exhaustive and meticulous. It has re-kindled interest in a subject that had first captured the spirit and imagination of the Buddhist public about 45 years ago. His in-depth research and analysis of the subject matter provides a sound framework in planning Dhammaduta missions in the future. There have been numerous requests for copies of his written paper.

We are pleased to publish Bhikkhu Bodhi's paper for the benefit of the larger public. We trust that the contents of this paper would generate an informed public discussion and lead to a better understanding of the work, infrastructure and the challenges faced by Dhammadutas in Europe.

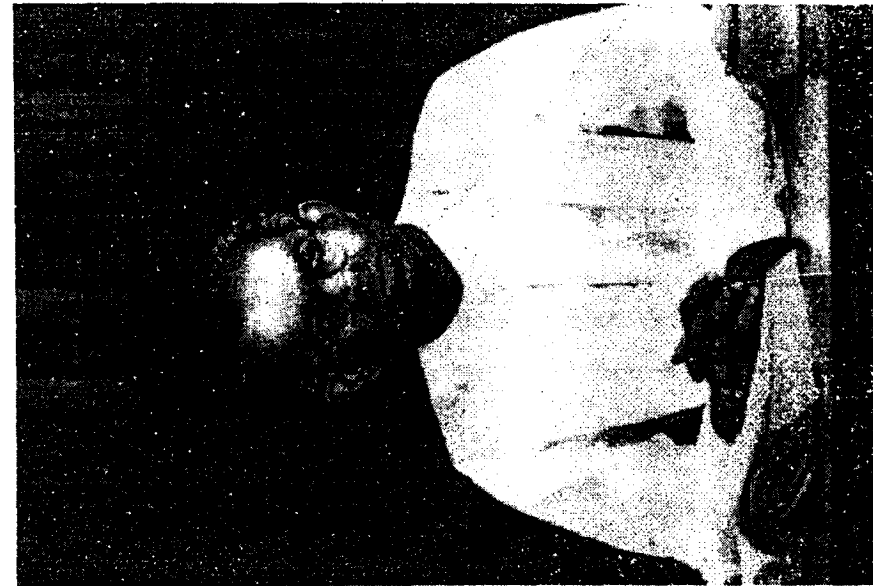
The noted British historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote that of all the historical changes in the West, the most important – and the one whose effects have been least understood – is the meeting of Buddhism in the Occident. In a similar vein the British philosopher Bertrand Russel reflected at the end of World War Two that " If we are to feel at home in the world, we will have to admit Asia to equality in our thoughts, not only politically but culturally. What changes this will bring, I do not know. But I am convinced that they will be profound and of the greatest importance ".

The German Dharmaduta Society takes immense satisfaction in being a vehicle for transmitting Asia's best gift i.e. the Dhamma, to the West, while not being unmindful of the wider implications of this exercise in the creation of a balanced, peaceful and harmonious world.

Senaka Weeraratna  
Hony. Secretary  
German Dharmaduta Society  
August 19, 2000



Ven. Mitirigala Dhammanisanthi Thero (This picture was taken shortly after the conferring of Upasampada i.e. higher ordination, at the Mitirigala Forest Hermitage, on August 22, 1972)



Asoka Weeraratna (1918-1999) (Founder of the German Dharmaduta Society, the Berlin Buddhist Vihara and the Mitirigala Forest Hermitage)

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Keynote address at a seminar on "The Necessity for Promoting Buddhism in Europe," held on the first death anniversary of Ven. Mitirigala Dhammanisanthi Thera  
Colombo, 2 July 2000

## Promoting Buddhism in Europe

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

### Prologue

Asoka Weeraratna was a man of vision who had the drive and stamina to translate his vision into fact. He once told me that his favourite saying of the Buddha was, "Do not become discouraged and give up, and do not rest satisfied with partial achievements." He himself took this piece of advice to heart. Whenever he set himself a goal, he did not merely dream about it and sing praises to its glory. Rather, he worked with incredible foresight and energy to make the goal a reality.

Because he followed these guidelines, Asoka Weeraratna's life was crowned by three great achievements: the establishment of the German Dharmaduta Society in Sri Lanka; the founding of the Berlin Buddhist Vihara in Germany; and the creation of the Nissarana Vanaya Hermitage at Mitirigala.

Already in the 1950s, he foresaw the potential for establishing Buddhism in the West, and to make his own contribution to the westward movement of the Dhamma, in 1952 he founded the German Dharmaduta Society. He started the Society in the back room of the family shop, though later it moved to premises purchased with funds he acquired through a zealous fund-raising drive.

Asoka realized that if Buddhism was to send down roots in

Germany, it was not enough to set up a base for German Buddhist missions here in Sri Lanka. He saw the need to have a Buddhist centre right in the heart of Germany itself. Thus he personally searched for suitable premises throughout Germany, and he found the ideal site in the lovely Frohnau district of Berlin. The place he discovered was Das Buddhistische Haus, an old Buddhist compound built by Paul Dahlke in 1924. Under his initiative the German Dharmaduta Society purchased the compound, renovated it, and in 1957 brought it back to life as the Berlin Buddhist Vihara. In the same year, Asoka Weeraratna organized the first Buddhist mission to Germany, led by three Sri Lankan Bhikkhus accompanied by himself. From that time to the present, monks from Sri Lanka and elsewhere have lived at the Berlin Vihara, helping to maintain a Theravada presence in Germany.

Asoka Weeraratna later turned his attention to the construction of the Nissarana Vanaya Hermitage at Mitirigala, which became one of Sri Lanka's most respected meditation monasteries. He equipped the monastery with all the facilities conducive to the meditative life, found an accomplished meditation master, Ven. Matara Sri Gnanarama Mahathera, to direct the meditation training, and then, his mission accomplished, he himself entered the Buddhist order under the name Ven. Dhammanisanthi Thera. Even by establishing Nissarana Vanaya, Asoka continued to make Buddhism available to Westerners, for the hermitage has accommodated Western monks resident in Sri Lanka since 1977.

#### Asoka and the German Theras

I myself first met Asoka in the early 1980s, when he was known as Ven. Dhammanisanthi. I immediately felt a close bond with him through his commitment to disseminating Buddhism in Germany. Though I am not German myself, my spiritual

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Mahathera, with whom I lived at the Forest Hermitage for twelve years. Ven. Nyanaponika and his teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahathera, also German, always had a keen interest in the spread of Buddhism in their native country. In this respect they shared a common vision with Asoka, which they expressed by their support for the German Dharmaduta Society. Ven. Nyanatiloka served as the first patron of the Society during the early 1950s, and through the years Ven. Nyanaponika was always ready to give advice. Before he left for Germany in 1982 to take up residence at the Berlin Vihara, Ven. Dhammanisanthi came to the Forest Hermitage in Udawattakele, Kandy to meet Ven. Nyanaponika. The two monks spent several hours, spread over two days, discussing prospects for the spread of Buddhism in Germany. I still recall that the discussion presented an interesting contrast between Ven. Dhammanisanthi's enthusiastic optimism and Ven. Nyanaponika's pragmatic realism and restraint.

#### An Opportune Time

The topic of this seminar, "The Necessity for Promoting Buddhism in Europe," is quite appropriate for commemorating Ven. Dhammanisanthi, and reminds us of his life's mission of trying to bring the Sasana to the West. The topic is also very timely, for the opportunity for disseminating Buddhism in the West is much more ample today than it was fifty years ago when the German Dharmaduta Society was born. At the same time, however, we should not assume that Buddhism is barely known in Europe and has to be introduced almost from scratch. To the contrary, in the past two decades public awareness of Buddhism in the West has increased sharply. In many Western countries today Buddhism is the fastest growing religion. In North America, Western Europe, and Australia-New Zealand, hundreds of Buddhist centres have sprung up almost overnight, offering teach-

ings and meditation retreats even in remote regions. Thus the challenge we face is not that of discussing how to introduce Buddhism to Europe as though it were an utterly unfamiliar creature, but of discovering how to promote the healthy growth of a Buddhism already sending down roots into European soil.

I will deal with my topic in three major parts. *First*, I will present a short survey of the historical development of Buddhism in Europe. This will necessarily be oversimplified and thus inadequate, but my aim is not so much to lay out all the facts as to show how Buddhism has arrived at its present stage of development in the West. *Second*, I will raise the question why Buddhism, at just this particular time, is exerting such a strong appeal on Westerners. Then, in the *third* place, I will briefly discuss a few special problems we face in trying to make our own Theravada form of Buddhism accessible to the West as a living and relevant tradition.

### I. Historical Overview

I divide the history of the Western engagement with Buddhism into three major phases. These phases are not totally discrete, for they intersect and overlap, but the threefold division provides a useful way of determining general trends.

#### Phase I: The Discovery of Buddhism

Phase I consisted in the academic study of Buddhist texts, aimed at discerning the broad contours of Buddhist history and doctrine. This project took place during the peak of the colonial period, when European countries were busy subjugating Asian peoples and incorporating their nations into their hungry empires. In many cases European interest in Buddhism was bound up with the Christian missionary enterprise of converting the native populations to Christianity.

Although reports about Asian Buddhist beliefs and prac-

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tices had been drifting back to Europe since the thirteenth century, a clear picture of Buddhism as a unitary whole did not take shape in Europe until the middle of the nineteenth century, just a little more than 150 years ago. Before then, the sundry reports that had reached scholars in Europe were generally haphazard, inaccurate, and conjectural, if not utterly fantastic. The first person to comprehend Buddhism as a unitary tradition and establish its historical origins was the brilliant French philologist Eugene Burnouf. Burnouf had studied Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan manuscripts that had been sent to him in Paris from the East. Based on these texts, with barely no other clues, he wrote his 600-page tome, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* (1844), in which he traced in detail Indian Buddhist history and surveyed its doctrines and texts. Though later generations of scholars have greatly expanded upon Burnouf's work and filled in many missing pieces, they regard as essentially accurate the outline of Indian Buddhism he proposed in his groundbreaking study.

In the decades following Burnouf, there appeared throughout Europe a galaxy of brilliant scholars who opened up the treasures locked away in all the different branches of Buddhism. These scholars fall into three main schools. The scholars of the "Anglo-Germanic School" focused on the Pali tradition. Their work emanated from the Pali Text Society, founded by T.W. Rhys Davids, and their ranks included Caroline Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Woodward, Hare, and Horner; the Danish scholars Trenckner, Fausboll, and Anderson; and the Swede Helmer Smith. The "Franco-Belgian School" investigated Indian Buddhism both Hinayana and Mahayana in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese texts; its luminaries were de la Vallee Poussin, Sylvain Levy, and Lamotte. The "Russian School" — represented by Stcherbatsky, Rosenberg, and Obermiller — concentrated on scholastic Indian Buddhism as preserved especially in Tibetan



texts. Although these scholars usually remained reticent about their own religious beliefs, by collecting Asian manuscripts, publishing modern editions of these texts, and providing translations and scholarly studies of Buddhist thought, they laid the indispensable foundation stone for the spread of the Dhamma in the West, namely, access to the original Buddhist sources.

The academic study of Buddhism initiated by these pioneers has continued through to the present time, despite the setback of two world wars and frequent shortages in funding. In Western universities and institutes, scholars map in ever finer details and with broader sweep the entire Buddhist heritage — from Sri Lanka to Mongolia, from Gandhara to Japan. Thus what I call "Phase I" in the history of Western Buddhism is not so much a temporary stage superseded by its successors as a preparation for the further evolution of Buddhism in its Western setting.

### Phase II: Elite Appropriation

Phase II in the European encounter with Buddhism I shall call "elite appropriation." By this, I mean the adoption of Buddhism as a living creed by an increasing number of intellectuals, writers, artists, and professionals. In the German-speaking world the catalyst for the transition from the mere academic investigation of Buddhism to its active appropriation was the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer published the first edition of his philosophical masterpiece, *The World as Will and Representation*, in 1819, before he had come across reliable accounts of Buddhist thought. However, his philosophical intuitions showed such striking parallels to the Dhamma that several decades later, when Schopenhauer did gain access to accurate material on Buddhism, he at once recognized the affinity of his own thought to the Buddha's doctrine. Thus, in the second edition of his book, he hailed Buddhism as "the most perfect" of all the world's religions. Such was his admiration

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for the Buddha that he kept a small statue of the Master on his mantle alongside a bust of his philosophical hero, Immanuel Kant.

Schopenhauer did not become a Buddhist himself, which would have been almost unthinkable in the Europe of his day, but his writings had a profound impact on later European thinkers and guided many to the Dhamma. At least three major figures owed their discovery of Buddhism to Schopenhauer's influence: the Austrian Indologist K.E. Neumann, who translated the Digha and Majjhima Nikayas and other Pali texts into German; the Bavarian judge George Grimm; and the Berlin homeopath Paul Dahlke. The last named pair, through their writings and promotional work, became the two leading proponents of Buddhism in Germany during the early part of the twentieth century. Their writings did not simply analyse Buddhism in terms of objective, impersonal categories, but tried to explain it from the inside, as experienced by one who had made the personal leap of faith.

### Arnold and the Theosophists

In the English-speaking world, the primary impetus for the adoption of Buddhism by educated Westerners came from Sir Edwin Arnold's inspirational poem on the Buddha's life, *The Light of Asia*. Arnold depicted the Buddha as a figure of heroic stature whose personality combined deep compassion for all humanity with a masterly capacity for rational thought. These two characteristics dovetailed perfectly with the intellectual milieu of the period and aroused in Arnold's readers a new respect for the Buddha and interest in his teachings. Though conservative Christians were indignant at the poem's success, the British intelligentsia of the period were liberal enough not to feel constrained by Christianity's claims to sole possession of the truth. The Theosophical movement, founded by Madame

Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott, also gave Buddhism a profile in the Anglo-American world. While their interpretation of Buddhism as a popular expression of esoteric wisdom bordered on the chimerical, the Theosophists helped to make Buddhism fashionable among those attracted to alternative ways of thought.

### The First Flowering

Inspired by the Dhamma, a few adventurous spirits, not content with mere book knowledge, left their homelands to travel to the East to learn Buddhism at its sources. Others like Childers and Rhys Davids, working in colonial administrations in Asia, already had access to native authorities on the Dhamma. By the turn of the century several Westerners took the decisive step of coming to the East to enter the Sangha. The pioneers in this development were the Englishman Allen Bennett, who became Ven. Ananda Metteyya in Burma (1901), and Anton Gueth, who became Ven. Nyanatiloka (1903). Though Ven. Ananda Metteyya later disrobed after a tentative mission to Britain, Ven. Nyanatiloka settled permanently in Sri Lanka, where in 1911 he founded Island Hermitage as a monastery especially for Western monks.

Within Europe, starting early in the twentieth century, Buddhist societies began to sprout, Buddhist journals commenced publication, and numerous books on Buddhism, of varying degrees of authenticity, attempted to bridge the gap between classical Buddhism and the Western intellectual heritage. During this phase of "elite appropriation" most proponents of Buddhism favoured the Pali tradition, as being far closer to the Buddha's original teachings than the baffling and ornate Mahayana sutras. What these thinkers emphasized in Buddhism was its rationality and realism, its ethical purity, its tolerance, its non-dogmatic approach to truth, and its compatibility with modern science. In this phase, with a few exceptions, the meditative, commu-

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The Berlin Buddhist Vihara (also known as Das Buddhistische Haus - Berlin, Frohnau).



Das Buddhistische Haus was built by Dr. Paul Dahlke in 1924. The German Dharmaduta Society purchased the property in 1957, and converted it into a Buddhist Vihara.

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nal, and devotional aspects of Buddhism were left quietly on the sidelines. In other words, theory prevailed over practice.

### Phase III: The Popularization of Buddhism

Phase III in the spread of Buddhism in the West began roughly in the 1960s and continues through to the present. This third phase might be described as the popularization of Buddhism. During this phase, Buddhism comes to exert its appeal on an increasing number of people of different lifestyles and its following proliferates rapidly. At the beginning of this phase Buddhism was largely a counter-cultural phenomenon, adopted by those in rebellion against the crass materialism and technocratic obsessions of modern society: hippies, acid heads, disaffected university students, artists, writers, and anarchists. But as these youthful rebels gradually became integrated into the mainstream, they brought their Buddhism with them.

Today Buddhism is espoused not only by those in the alternative culture, but by businessmen, physicists, computer programmers, housewives, real-estate agents, even by sports stars, movie actors, and rock musicians. Perhaps several hundred thousand Europeans have adopted Buddhism in one or another of its different forms, while many more quietly incorporate Buddhist practices into their daily lives. The presence of large Asian Buddhist communities in the West also enhances the visibility of the Dhamma. Thousands of books on Buddhism are now available, dealing with the teachings at both scholarly and popular levels, while Buddhist magazines and journals expand their circulation each year. Buddhist influences subtly permeate various disciplines: philosophy and ecology, psychology and health care, the arts and literature, even Christian theology. Indeed, already three years ago *Time* magazine devoted a full-length cover story to the spread of Buddhism in America, and at least five books on the subject are in print.

### Facilitating Factors

The transition in Western Buddhism from Phase II to Phase III was facilitated by two main factors. One was the increasing number of Asian Buddhist teachers who travelled to the West — Theravada bhikkhus, Japanese Zen masters, Tibetan lamas — either to give lectures and conduct retreats, or to settle there permanently and establish Buddhist centres. The second factor was the return to the West of the young Westerners who had trained in Asia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and now came back to their home countries to spread the Dhamma. From the mid-1980s on we see even a new sub-phase of Phase III, or perhaps an incipient Phase IV: the emergence of a generation of Western Buddhist teachers who have never been to Asia but have received their full training in the West.

What is characteristic of Western Buddhism in Phase III, in distinction from the earlier phases, is the focus on Buddhist practice, especially the practice of meditation. In this phase it is not the academic study of Buddhist texts and doctrines that dominates (as in Phase I), or the attempt to interpret the Dhamma through the prism of Western thought (as in Phase II), but the appropriation of Buddhism as a practice that can bring deep transformations in one's innermost being as well as in the conduct of everyday life. This does not necessarily mean that Buddhist practice is being taken up in accordance with canonical or traditional Asian models, nor that it is pursued to attain Nibbana in the sense upheld by classical Buddhist doctrine. Often Western Buddhists give their own twist to Buddhist concepts, sometimes in ways that depart drastically from canonical standards and from an Asian standpoint might border on "heresy." But in Phase III, Buddhism is viewed as in some sense a path to awakening, a way that brings deep understanding of the mind and makes accessible new dimensions of being. Hence at this stage Buddhism becomes a means of spiritual transformation through

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direct experience, through insights not arrived at by mere conceptual reflection.

### A Variety of Schools

In Phase III, we also find the arrival of various schools of Asian Buddhism, which peacefully coexist, pursuing their own growth and cooperating with each other to secure common aims. With the passage from Phase II to Phase III a noticeable shift takes place in the type of Buddhism generally adopted by Western Buddhists. In Phase II, Pali Buddhism was dominant, though I must stress that this adherence to the Pali heritage did *not* entail a commitment to any form of Theravada Buddhism as practised in Asian lands. In fact, the elite Buddhists often looked upon Asian Theravada as a degeneration from the pristine canonical doctrine, which they believed was a unique possession of their own. But with the rise of Phase III the focus of attraction shifts away from the Pali tradition: first to Zen Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s; and then to Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism in the 1980s and 1990s. Further, new types of Buddhism come onto the scene, schools peculiar to the West, such as Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing (based in France, but with a strong American chapter), the Arya Maitreya Mandala (centred in Germany), and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (based in Britain, but with several Continental chapters). These are partly syncretistic, partly innovative attempts to create new styles of Buddhist practice conformable to the Western temperament. Also the age range of Buddhist followers varies between the schools. Today in Germany most followers of the Pali tradition are in their 50s and 60s, while the followers of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism are in their 30s and 40s. This development is critically important for us, as followers of the Theravada, to understand, and I will therefore return to it later.

## II. The Western Receptivity to Buddhism

At this point, I want to raise the question: How are we to understand the surge of interest in Buddhism among Westerners in recent years? How do we account for the eagerness with which so many today are ready to explore the Dhamma and often to deeply embrace it? It is necessary to address this question in order to begin to see the needs that we must fulfil as we try to make our own contribution to the spread of the Dhamma in Europe.

### Nature Abhors a Vacuum

I think the answer to this question unfolds in roughly two distinct stages, corresponding to the last two phases in the Western adoption of Buddhism that I spoke of just before. During Phase II, "the phase of elite appropriation," intellectuals were drawn to Buddhism because it filled a vacuum that had been growing ever wider in Europe since the seventeenth century. This vacuum was the absence of any comprehensive body of wisdom teachings that could offer a key to the deeper meaning of human existence. The responsibility for shedding light on the meaning of existence had traditionally been assigned to philosophy, but from the seventeenth century onwards philosophy came to renounce this task in favour of other concerns. Besides, such guidance that philosophy did offer, as in Spinoza's *Ethics*, was usually embedded in systems of thought so subtle and complex that few people could understand them.

Of course, Christianity too staked out for itself a claim to hold the key to the riddle of existence, but the main thrust of orthodox Christianity has not been to show the way to wisdom. Its purpose is to offer the prospect of an eternal afterlife in heaven through faith in God and Christ the Saviour, and it was just such faith that was coming into question. Further, Christianity's own record as a defender of human values was far from

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impressive. Its legacy of crusades, inquisitions, forced conversions, and intolerance repelled rather than attracted ethically sensitive minds, while its alliance with the colonial regimes confirmed suspicions about its imperialistic designs. Moreover, as science strode boldly into one arena of knowledge after another, often in the face of staunch resistance from the Church, it discredited Christian claims to the infallibility of revelation. Thus for a growing number of independent thinkers the Christian religion had become irrelevant.

When translations of Buddhist texts and expositions of Buddhist thought began to appear in the late nineteenth century, they seemed to offer the West exactly what it was lacking: a system of spiritual wisdom that could give illumination and moral guidance yet did not demand unquestioning faith in theological dogmas. Instead, it rested its claims upon human reason and personal insight into fundamental truths and universal laws. The way Buddhism impinged on the Western mind during this period reveals both the strength and weakness in the Western perception of Buddhism. The strength lay in a deep and clear grasp of the doctrinal principles of the Dhamma, expressed in works that were utterly compelling in their insights, logic, and literary eloquence. The weakness was the understanding of Buddhism as primarily a rational, ideational system, to replace the tottering belief system of the Christian churches. Another limitation was that Buddhism in this phase still appealed mainly to the educated elite and thus could attract only those astute enough to break away from the cultural and religious mainstream, which was still predominantly Christian.

### The Conditions for Popularization

For the transition to Phase III to take place, that is, for Buddhism to spread more widely through the general population, certain additional conditions were necessary, and these only

became sufficiently widespread in the second half of the twentieth century. One was the triumph of liberal democracy over autocratic political systems. Under the heading of democracy we must include not only political democracy, but also the democracy of the mind, an openness to new ways of thought and tolerance for viewpoints that differ radically from those of one's own intellectual heritage. This openness was encouraged by a partial change in the attitude of the Christian churches towards other faiths, which in the West after the Second Vatican Council (1963-65) swung towards greater respect and tolerance for non-Christian religions.

A second preparatory factor was a fair degree of economic affluence, which freed Europeans from excessive concern with material security and gave them the leisure to explore new avenues of thought. The rise of the consumerist society also helped them see the limitations to material development as a final solution to our quest for happiness.

A third factor was the relatively high standard of liberal education established in the 1960s, enabling a large proportion of young people to attend the university. Higher education exposed them to multiple viewpoints in all the domains of human knowledge, and also trained them to think critically and deeply about new ideas.

A fourth preparatory factor was improved means of transportation and communication, which facilitated contacts between East and West. Now curious Westerners could easily travel to the East to experience Buddhism first hand in its own native setting, while Buddhist teachers from Asia could move West to propagate the Dhamma.

The fifth factor, following naturally from the fourth, was the actual arrival in the West of Buddhist teachers, both Asians and Westerners trained in Asia. These teachers brought Buddhism as a dynamic faith that they embodied in their lives through years of serious training.

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While the above five factors constituted the necessary conditions for Buddhism to become accessible to a sizable number of Europeans, they are not a sufficient explanation for the rapid escalation of Western interest in Buddhism. To pinpoint the decisive cause for this phenomenon, I must refer back to the vacuum or void that had opened up right beneath the feet of European civilization, that is, the absence of a solid, authoritative spiritual tradition that could give guidance in the mastery of life. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this void was acutely felt only by the more discerning Western minds, disenchanted with both doctrinaire Christianity and economic materialism. Ordinary people were somehow able to balance their ancestral Christian faith with a bright optimism about the coming Golden Age, to be achieved through science and technology.

By the late 1950s, however, the picture had drastically changed. After two world wars and a prolonged cold war that threatened the whole world with thermonuclear destruction, countless people found their trust in the intrinsic goodness of human nature crumble into dust. Such horrors as the Nazi Holocaust and the Hiroshima atom bomb not only undermined faith in a benevolent God guiding the whole creation, but also brought to light the dangers in mere rationality not illuminated by a higher wisdom and staunch commitment to ethics. The most brilliant minds of the West, relying on the rational intellect, had twice plunged the whole world into barbaric irrationality, with death tolls numbering in the tens of millions. Now, with even more lethal weapons of destruction at hand, they threatened to do so again. Thus the void that sensitive nineteenth century thinkers had seen on the horizon had expanded until it had swallowed up almost everyone. And not only had it expanded, but for many it had acquired a sharp and compelling urgency

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that could not be quenched by any system of ideas, however noble. What they needed was a programme of action, which in many cases meant a deep personal engagement in the spiritual quest.

At the same time that the fear of nuclear war cast long shadows over the entire globe, unprecedented material affluence in the West brought into easy reach the comforts, conveniences, and sensory delights that earlier generations had only dreamt about. Yet while this consumerist paradise mesmerized many (and still continues to do so), at least a few people "with little dust in their eyes" realized that such mundane pleasures could bring no lasting peace to the heart. At this point, for such spiritually sensitive Westerners, the message embedded in the Four Noble Truths was no longer a splendid system of ideas, to be admired in the comfort of an armchair. The message had become, rather, a medicine for curing a terrible disease, the disease of suffering, and the one sensible thing to be done with it, as with any medicine, was to take it. Hence for the Buddhists in Phase III of Western Buddhism, the Dhamma presented itself as a path of practice pivoting on the training and mastery of the mind. As teachers and centres became available, growing numbers of Westerners took up the practice eagerly, ready to follow it wherever it might lead.

### The Need for a Social Ethic

But Buddhism offered not only a method of mind training that could bring inner peace and deeper self-knowledge, it also fulfilled another profound need of the Western soul. As part of its deep intellectual heritage, Western civilization was committed to the idea that human happiness largely depends on the reformation of the social order in ways that eliminate political tyranny, economic oppression, and social injustice. The commitment to this premise was responsible for the rise of democ-



This Picture was taken at the Public Seminar held on July 2, 2000 to commemorate the first death anniversary of Ven. Mitririgala Dhammanisanti Thero. at the Mahaweli Center Auditorium, Colombo. (Left to Right) Ven. Rathnala Punnaratana Thero, Ven. (Dr) Vijayarajapura Seelavansa Thero, Ven. Nyanadasana Thero (Cresce), Dr. Granville Dharmawardena, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi Thero, Dr. K.D.G. Wimalaratne and Bhikkhuni Kusuma Devendita.

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racy in the West, as well as for less successful experiments with various forms of socialism. However, the experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had shown that without some code of ethical guidance, mere aspirations for freedom and democracy could easily give birth to their opposites. Thus the French Revolution, launched under the motto of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," ended up with the guillotine. The Bolshevik Revolution, with its promise of a "dictatorship of the proletariat," culminated in the Soviet police state. Western idealists saw in Buddhism the foundations for a lofty social ethic devoted to world peace, social justice, and ecological sanity, yet internally protected by its moral code against the deformities to which secular political utopianism was prone.

#### The Search for Community

To understand the appeal of Buddhism to many present-day Westerners, another factor we must consider is the general breakdown of community in modern Western culture. With increasing industrialization and urbanization, the older human-scale social structures that allowed each person to find a meaningful place in the whole gave way to huge, monstrous institutions that reduced individuals to mere cogs in an impersonal social order. People have come to feel isolated, alienated, cut off from the bonds of social solidarity, trapped in a system that fuels ruthless individualism. These destructive values have provoked a widespread psychological crisis marked by chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. The escape routes people seek are promiscuous sex, violent entertainment, alcoholism, and drugs; but these, of course, do not offer a real solution.

When Buddhism arrived on the scene it seemed to offer a counterweight to the loneliness and isolation so many people felt even in their overcrowded cities. For one thing, it stressed such values as universal love, compassion, cooperation, and al-



truism, half-forgotten ideals of the Christian legacy. But just as importantly, it ushered in a new sense of community. As Buddhist groups sought their own organizational forms, they gradually evolved towards the model of the Buddhist centre, where fellow practitioners meet regularly in a spirit of friendship to practise and study the Dhamma together, usually under the guidance of a teacher. Many Buddhist societies now have residential facilities where the more dedicated members live either temporarily or permanently. Some have urban centres accessible to people during the working week, and country centres some distance away to which members can resort for longer meditation retreats.

#### The Shift among Traditions

As I mentioned earlier, when Buddhism in the West enters Phase III, a shift occurs away from the Pali tradition towards Zen and Tibetan Vajrayana. One explanation for this might be the more attractive, more exotic surfaces of these schools of Buddhism; another factor might be the charismatic personalities of their teachers, the Zen masters and Tibetan lamas. But such an explanation is not complete. The main reason these traditions have gained in popularity over the Theravada is, I believe, because within their fold the lineage of meditation practice has been kept more alive than in mainstream Theravada. Certainly in the Pali Canon the Buddha repeatedly emphasizes the urgency of meditation above all else, and this message does live on in small pockets of earnest Theravadin practitioners throughout southern Asia. However, the European Buddhists of the older generations had set the pace by viewing Pali Buddhism largely in rationalistic terms, as a lofty ethic and impressive system of thought. Almost as if to confirm this, the few representatives of Asian Theravada to settle in the West have tended to present Buddhism largely in doctrinal and ethical terms. Rarely do they

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exhibit the same degree of spiritual vitality as the Mahayana and Vajrayana masters. Since present-day Western seekers are looking for a practice they can incorporate into their lives, not just a system of ideas they can admire and discuss, they naturally feel the appeal of the alternative forms of Buddhism — Zen, Vajrayana, and new Western Buddhist schools — over the Theravada.

This, however, is not to say that a meditation tradition rooted in the Theravada is lacking in the West. A number of Westerners who had come to Asian countries years ago to practise under qualified teachers later returned to the West to teach and establish Buddhist centres. But what we find, as an interesting development, is that often such Western teachers of Theravada-based meditation do not consider themselves adherents of Theravada Buddhism in its doctrinal sense. Instead, explicitly or implicitly, they distance themselves from Asian Theravada and call their style of Buddhism "the Vipassana tradition" or "the practice of mindful awareness." While they have evolved a rigorous system of training, they often lift Vipassana meditation out from its setting in Buddhist faith and doctrine, presenting it almost as an autonomous discipline of psychological insight and self-awareness. This is certainly a weak spot in the Western approach to the Dhamma, for the religious and philosophical dimensions of classical Buddhism are necessary for insight meditation to lead to its real goal, "the taintless liberation of the mind." Neglect of the textual and doctrinal side of Buddhism can result in a diluted, shoddy understanding of the Dhamma. But the stripped-down style of practice — non-religious, non-doctrinal, non-monastic insight meditation — is the dominant mode in which Westerners are taking up Theravada Buddhism. This development might induce us to examine our own tradition more closely to ask ourselves why the Dhamma is being approached in such a partial fashion, through such a

pick-and-choose policy, instead of being embraced as an organic whole.

### III. The Challenge of Bringing Theravada to the West

This brings me to the third major division of my talk, the special challenges we face in transmitting Theravada Buddhism to the West. When I ponder this issue, the question that immediately lodges itself in my mind is this: "What exactly is the type of Theravada Buddhism that we wish to spread?" For one thing, as I mentioned above, it is not merely texts and ideas that Westerners are looking for, not merely the Buddhism of the books. Books are certainly needed to introduce people to the Dhamma, to give them material for study and reflection. The point I wish to make is not that literature on Buddhism is dispensable, but that it is insufficient. For the Dhamma to take deep root in people's hearts, it must come to them, not between the covers of a book, but in living, breathing persons who display the truth of the teaching in their lives.

#### The Ideal Form

Thus when I raise the question, "What type of Buddhism do we wish to spread?" I am not thinking of the pure canonical Dhamma, which exists as such only in the books. In actuality, Buddhism has always been expressed in concrete practices, embedded in social structures, and embodied by real human beings. Thus we have to consider this aspect of Theravada Buddhism and not merely the doctrinal formulas of the Pali Canon. So when we ponder how to bring Buddhism to the West, we have to decide which of the many faces of Theravada we want to bring. To some extent, this is premature, since if Buddhism does eventually take root in the West, it will assume forms particular to Western social and cultural conditions. But to begin we need something to serve as a seed or nucleus.

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The ideal form of Theravada to present would be one that fuses all healthy aspects of the tradition into an organic whole. The transmission would have to focus on the practice of meditation, yet it should include a strong emphasis on Buddhist ethics (including Buddhist perspectives on contemporary ethical issues), textual and doctrinal study, devotional practices, and a fair share of ritual, too; but ritual would have to be integrated into the spiritual path, not pursued in compliance with mere cultural norms. The meditation practice should be the heart of the transmission. Once students experience the beneficial effects of meditation on their lives, in time they will develop keener interest in the study of texts, in devotional practices, in the precepts, and in ritual. Ritual will then serve to cement these varied aspects of Dhamma into a coherent whole, animated from within by the meditative experience.

#### A Monastic Transmission

But now we come to the heart of the issue. Theravada Buddhism, in its orthodox mould, has always looked upon the monastic order, the Sangha, as the bearer of the Buddhist heritage. Thus, if Theravada is to take hold in the West, it seems it should be through a monastic transmission guarded and upheld by lay support. Without this, we would probably wind up with a watered-down or secularized version of the Theravada, as we find today in the Vipassana sanghas. A monastic transmission is needed to keep alive the stress on renunciation and restraint so characteristic of the true Dhamma.

The need for a monastic transmission, however, immediately runs up against a practical problem. In Sri Lanka today it is extraordinarily difficult to find monks who possess the personal qualities needed by a Buddhist "messenger of Dhamma" (*dhammaduta*), including the ability to communicate the Dhamma effectively to people from a very different cultural

background. This has adverse repercussions for the whole project of propagating Theravada Buddhism abroad, making the Theravada something of a still backwater on the otherwise lively Western Buddhist frontier.

Of all the Asian Theravada communities, I feel the Sri Lankans have the strongest potential for transmitting the Dhamma to the West. From what I have observed, the Thai, Cambodian, and Burmese monks cater almost exclusively to their own communities and seldom even imagine that the Dhamma can have any pull on Westerners. It is the Sri Lankans who have been most inspired by the ideal of passing the Dhamma to the West, and again it is the Sri Lankan Sangha that includes monks ready to learn Western languages and translate the teachings into a message meaningful to Westerners.

Yet, despite this, when we survey the Western Buddhist scene, the results are disappointing. We see a tremendous surge of interest in Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, in new Buddhist movements like the Order of Interbeing and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and in Vipassana as a secular practice. But apart from Ajahn Sumedho's Amaravati network, which consists of Western monks and nuns, the orthodox Theravada Sangha has had relatively little impact in the West. Of course, one might just interpret this as evidence that Westerners are too decadent to appreciate the true Dhamma. However, that interpretation would not only be uncharitable, but it would also be wrong. A sizeable number of Western Buddhists feel themselves powerfully drawn towards the Theravada tradition and are on the lookout for monks to offer teachings. Thus the desire is there; it is just the resources to satisfy it that are in short supply.

### The State of Monastic Education

Although I do not have an easy solution to this problem, it would be useful to make a preliminary diagnosis of its origins. I

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believe part of the explanation lies in the system of monastic education that prevails here in Sri Lanka. This system is extremely inadequate and needs drastic revision from the ground up: revision with respect to the aim, depth, and breadth of monastic training. When monks trained in this system go overseas to expound the Dhamma, they find themselves facing severe handicaps. Not only must they learn to adapt to a society where social relationships are not governed by clearly defined roles and expectations, but they must really strike at the existential concerns of Western students. Routine preaching and ceremonies simply won't do.

The only way for the Sri Lankan Sangha to help meet the challenge of promoting Theravada Buddhism in the West is by making exponential improvements in monastic education right here in Sri Lanka. If a monk is to go abroad to spread the Dhamma, he must have not only a thorough knowledge of his own Theravada tradition, but acquaintance with other subjects too. He will need some knowledge of the history and schools of Buddhism, comparative religion, and English. He should also know, or be ready to learn, the language of the country in which he will work.

Beyond these specific areas of competence, he will require the intellectual openness and acuity to comprehend the dispositions, attitudes, and worldviews of people from a different culture and relate to them in meaningful ways. He must also have some grounding in the real practice of the Dhamma, for knowledge of books and doctrines, however wide, will be fruitless if not coupled with dedication to the practice. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to find a monastic institute that can impart the necessary training, and the Buddhist prelates, due to their conservatism, resist proposed reforms. In this respect Buddhist educational institutions compare poorly with Christian seminaries, which equip their own missionaries with a thorough and

wide-ranging education that often excels the Buddhist institutes even in the field of Buddhist studies.

### The Revival of Meditation

The problem of deficient education is compounded by the decline of the practical training in meditation throughout the Sri Lankan monastic system. Thus the training of the monks focuses not so much on guiding them along the Buddha's path to awakening as on teaching them how to serve as custodians of a distinct social and cultural heritage. I do not want to dismiss the value of this service, for within this country it is quite necessary to preserve the cultural and social pillars of Sri Lankan Buddhism, especially against the incursions of evangelical Christianity and materialistic consumerism. But this function should be subordinated to the more important one of teaching the young monks the path to wisdom and peace; it should not become so domineering that the original path gets covered with mist and weeds.

The decline of a living meditation tradition in the bhikkhu training centres seems to stem from the sharp distinction that the Theravada tradition makes between village monks and forest monks. In this division, the village-and-town monks devote their time to preaching and community service, while the forest monks engage in full-time meditation. This division creates a situation where a monk not intent on winning the path to Nibbana in this present life postpones the practice of meditation to some future existence, justifying his life in robes as a service to society. Such social service, however, takes on a largely secularized hue and easily veers off into political activism. Seldom is it integrated into a true path of spiritual development.

On the other side of the divide, those monks who are keen on winning the goal in this life withdraw into the forest for full-time meditation and rarely show any inclination to share their

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insights with the wider community. Also, given their method of training, they will generally lack the linguistic and social skills needed to propagate the Dhamma in foreign countries. Thus we have this sharp dichotomy: educated town monks without deep personal insight into the Dhamma or experience in meditation, and meditation monks without much inclination to propagate the teaching.

Since it would be inappropriate to force monks devoted to full-time meditation to take up a more active vocation, the remedy needed to redress this imbalance seems to require a revitalization of meditation practice within the bhikkhu training institutes. This cannot be done, however, merely by imposing meditation on the monks from the outside as a mandatory discipline. Meditation practice does not occur in a vacuum. It must spring up from an inner need, under the impetus given by a clear understanding of the foundations and objectives of Buddhist spirituality. So what is really needed is a rejuvenation of the spiritual challenge at the heart of the Buddhist monastic life.

### The Training of Dhammadutas

Personally, I do not think it is prudent to try to create institutions expressly for the purpose of training monks as "Buddhist missionaries" or *dhammadutas*. Such institutions could easily attract monks who want to go abroad for the wrong reasons: to gain prestige, to become popular, perhaps to find employment and disrobe. I feel it is wiser to strengthen programmes in the existing bhikkhu training centres. At the same time, we should keep an eye open for capable bhikkhus enrolled in these programmes who display the qualities needed to propagate the Dhamma in the West. We must also remember that the purpose in training monks is not to make them *dhammadutas*, but to lead them along the way to enlightenment. Thus the training should

focus on the inner development of the monk, both in those qualities conducive to personal growth and in those that allow for a compassionate outflow of his spiritual development to others. Monks who have the special skills, and the inclination to work for the spread of the Dhamma, can then be chosen for overseas assignments, providing they also display the inner maturity required by such a task.

### An Inconclusive Conclusion

I come to an inconclusive conclusion. At the present stage in its evolution, Buddhism in the West is taking on a form that focuses on the Dhamma as a path of inner transformation through meditation and contemplation, with other aspects of Buddhist practice subordinated to this concern. We should not immediately conclude that Western Buddhism is therefore an ideal model for Asians to emulate. Western Buddhists often lack a solid knowledge of the texts, and thus are prone to bend the teachings to fit their own agendas and expectations. It is here, I think, that Asian monks with a sound scholarly knowledge of the Dhamma can make a valuable contribution. But while corrective measures are needed in Western Buddhism to ensure right understanding, it is clear that the central focus of Western Buddhists will be on personal meditative experience as the way to inner peace and wisdom.

If Sri Lankan Buddhists are to make a significant contribution to the healthy growth of Buddhism in the West, we will need representatives of the Dhamma who are also living embodiments of the Dhamma. That is, we need monks — and nuns as well — who express in their lives and characters the potentials of the Dhamma as a way of life that brings real wisdom, purity, and peace within, and overflows in expressions of kindness and compassion for others. This is a difficult challenge, but it is an indispensable requirement if Sri Lanka is to contrib-

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ute to the development of Buddhism in the West. Since the main responsibility for transmitting the Dhamma rests with the monastic order, the Sangha in this country must set its own house in order if it is to be qualified to perform this task. This will require some intense internal criticism and attempts at genuine reform, especially in the system of monastic training. If such changes do not take place, it is unlikely that Sri Lanka will be able to contribute much more to the growth of Buddhism in Europe than to maintain viharas that serve Sri Lankan expatriates.

I will end on a bright note. Despite the shortage of qualified *dhammaduta* monks, scattered across the West there are a few Theravada viharas and Buddhist centres maintained by monks who, in their own quiet and non-assertive way, are working to spread the Dhamma. Prominent among them we find Sri Lankan monks, who often must take up this task with much hardship and self-sacrifice. The hardship they face is not only external, but internal as well. They must maintain a delicate discipline amidst the temptations of the Western consumerist culture, and must also struggle against the weight of Buddhist tradition to find the clear message of the Buddha hidden behind stultifying conventions. Such monks generally do not have large organizations behind them, or financial backing from home, but through their dedication to the Dhamma and compassionate concern for others, they actively seek to help Westerners find their way to the Buddha's path. Their selfless work deserves appreciation and support from all sincere Buddhists in this country.

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Sections of the audience  
at the Seminar



Ven. Nyanaponika Thero is handing over a Buddha Statue and a Oil-lamp Book on the Buddha Dhamma to Asoka Weeraratna prior to the latter's departure from Colombo to Germany for Dharmaduta work, on 25th February, 1953. In the centre of the picture is Ven. Akerehiye Amaratwansa Thero.



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(Left to Right) Ven. Rathmale Punnaratana Thero, Ven. (Dr.) Vijayarajapura Seelavansa Thero, Ven. Nyanadassana Thero (Greece), Dr. Granville Dharmawardena, Ven Bhikkhu Bodhi Thero, and Dr. K.D.G. Wimalaratne (partly covered)

The First Buddhist Mission at the Berlin Buddhist Vihara (July 1957). Picture (left to right) Ven. Gama Thero (Head of Mission), Ven. Khaminda Thero, Ven. Vimala Thero, Asoka Weeraratna (Founder and Hony. Secretary, German Dharmaduta Society) at the right hand corner (between Ven. Khaminda Thero and Ven. Vimala Thero).



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This photograph was taken at a Public Meeting held in Colombo in 1954. The banner reads "To establish the Buddha Sasana in Germany. Please contribute to the Million Rupee Trust Fund".

From left to right (front row) Beginning 4th from left Mr. A. Ratnayake (Minister of Home Affairs), Mr. Asoka Weeraratna (Founder and Hony. Secretary, German Dharmaduta Society), Ven. Galle Anuradha, Ven. U. Seelananda (Burma), Ven. Nyanaponika (Germany), a Buddhist layman name unknown (Nepal), Mr. H. Nelson H. Soysa (a Trustee of the German Dharmaduta Society), Mr U Ba Win (the Ambassador from Burma), Mr. D.M. Nonis (an employee of P.J. Weeraratna & Sons, Colombo).

Note: Ven. U. Seelananda from Burma is the current Director of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University based in Rangoon, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma)



THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

*The*  
*Connected*  
Discourses  
*of the*  
Buddha



*A New Translation of the*  
Samyutta Nikāya



*Translated from the Pāli*

*by*

Bhikkhu Bodhi

VOLUME I



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#### Concordances

1. Verse Parallels 1967
2. Exact Sutta Parallels 1983
3. Template Parallels 1986
4. Auditor-Setting Variants 1989

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## Preface

The present work offers a complete translation of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, "The Connected Discourses of the Buddha," the third major collection in the Sutta Piṭaka, or "Basket of Discourses," belonging to the Pāli Canon. The collection is so named because the suttas in any given chapter are connected (*saṃyutta*) by the theme after which the chapter is named. The full *Saṃyutta Nikāya* has been translated previously and published in five volumes by the Pali Text Society under the title *The Book of Kindred Sayings*. The first two volumes were translated by Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, the last three by F.L. Woodward. This translation, first issued between 1917 and 1930, is dated both in style and technical terminology, and thus a fresh rendition of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* into English has long been an urgent need for students of early Buddhism unable to read the texts in the original Pāli.

My own translation was undertaken in response to a request made to me in the early 1980s by then Bhikkhu Khantipālo (now Laurence Mills). This request was subsequently reinforced by an encouraging letter from Richard Gombrich, the present president of the Pali Text Society, who has been keenly aware of the need to replace the PTS translations of the *Nikāyas* by more contemporary versions. Although this appeal came in 1985, owing to prior literary commitments, most notably to the editing of Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli's translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, I could not begin my translation of the *Saṃyutta* in earnest until the summer of 1989. Now, ten years later, after numerous interruptions and the daunting tasks of revision and annotation, it has at last reached completion.

As with *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, this transla-

tion aims to fulfil two ideals: first, fidelity to the intended meaning of the texts themselves; and second, the expression of that meaning in clear contemporary language that speaks to the non-specialist reader whose primary interest in the Buddha's teaching is personal rather than professional. Of course, any ideas about "the intended meaning of the texts themselves" will inevitably reflect the subjective biases of the translator, but I have tried to minimize this danger to the best of my ability. To attempt to translate Pāli into a modern Western language rooted in a conceptual framework far removed from the "thought world" of the ancient suttas is also bound to involve some degree of distortion. The only remedy against this, perhaps, is to recommend to the reader the study of Pāli and the reading of the material in the original. Unlike English, or even Sanskrit, Pāli is a highly specialized language with only one major sphere of application—the Buddha's teachings—and thus its terminology is extremely precise, free from intrusive echoes from other domains of discourse. It is also rich in nuances, undertones, and conceptual interconnections that no translation can ever succeed in replicating.

My translation is a hybrid based on editions of the Saṃyutta Nikāya coming from different lines of textual transmission. In defense of this approach, as against translating exclusively from one tradition, I can do no better than quote Léon Feer in his introduction to Part I of his PTS edition of SN: "In the choice of readings, I made no preference, and I adopted always the reading which seemed the best wherever it might come from" (p. xiii). I used as my root text the Burmese-script Sixth Buddhist Council edition, but I compared this version with the Sinhala-script Buddha Jayanti edition (itself influenced by the Burmese one), and with the PTS's roman-script edition (which itself draws from older Sinhala and Burmese versions). It was not seldom that I preferred a reading from one of these other versions to that in the Burmese edition, as can be seen from my notes. I also consulted the footnotes on variants in the PTS edition, which occasionally, in my view, had a better reading than any in the printed editions. Though all versions have their flaws, as time went on I found myself increasingly leaning towards the older Sinhala transmission as in many respects the most reliable.

Because Pāli verse is generally much more difficult to translate than prose, at the outset I put aside the first volume of SN, the *Sagāthāvagga*, composed largely in verse, and began with the four prose volumes, II–V. I was apprehensive that, if I began with the *Sagāthāvagga*, I would have quickly lost heart and given up shortly after having made a start. This proved to be a prudent choice, for the *Sagāthāvagga* is indeed sometimes like a dense jungle, with the bare problem of interpreting knotty verses compounded by the multitude of variant readings. The disproportionately large number of notes attached to this volume, many dealing with the variant readings, should give the reader some idea of the difficulty.

Then in late 1998, towards the very end of this project, after I had already written, typed, proofed, and revised my translation of the *Sagāthāvagga* and its notes several times, the PTS issued a new edition of that volume, intended to replace Feer's pioneering edition of 1884. At that point I was hardly prepared to redo the entire translation, but I did compare the readings found in the new edition with those I had commented on in my notes. In some cases I made minor changes in the translation based on the readings of this edition; in others I stuck to my guns, mentioning the new variant in the relevant notes. This edition also introduced numbering of the verses, something not found in any previous edition of the *Sagāthāvagga* but an idea I had already implemented in my translation to facilitate cross-references in the notes and concordances. However, the new edition of the *Sagāthāvagga* numbered the verses differently than I did, and thus, to keep my translation consistent with the new Pāli text, I had to renumber all the verses—in the text, in the references to the verses in the notes, and in the concordances.

The Saṃyutta Nikāya is divided into five principal parts called *Vaggas*, which I render as books. These are in turn divided into a total of fifty-six *saṃyuttas*, the main chapters, which are further divided into *vaggas* or subchapters (the same Pāli word as used for the books; I differentiate them with capital and simple letters, an orthographic distinction not found in Oriental scripts). The *vaggas* finally are made up of suttas. In the text of the translation I number the *saṃyuttas* in two ways: as chapters within the *Vagga* I give them roman numbers, beginning with "I" within each *Vagga*; as *saṃyuttas* I number them in simple

consecutive order through the whole collection, in arabic numerals, from 1 to 56. I number the suttas by giving first the absolute number of the sutta within the saṃyutta, and following this, in parenthesis, the number of the sutta within the vagga (except when the saṃyutta has no divisions into vaggas). In the introductions and notes I refer to the suttas by the number of the saṃyutta followed by the number of the sutta within that saṃyutta, ignoring the division into vaggas. Thus, for example, 22:95 is saṃyutta 22, sutta 95. The page numbers of the PTS edition are embedded in square brackets, with angle brackets used for the new edition of the Sagāthāvagga.

I have equipped this work with two types of introduction. At the very beginning, before Part I, there is a general introduction to the entire Saṃyutta Nikāya. Here I explain the overall structure of SN, its place in the Pāli Canon, and its particular function in relation to the Buddha's dispensation; I end with a discussion of some technical problems concerning the translation. Each of the five parts is then provided with its own introduction in which I give a survey of each saṃyutta in that part, focusing especially upon the doctrinal principles that underlie the major saṃyuttas. Those who find the General Introduction too dry for their taste should still not pass over the introductions to the parts, for in these I aim to provide the reader with a study guide to the material in the saṃyuttas. Similarly, a general table of contents precedes the entire work, dividing it only into Vaggas and saṃyuttas, while a more detailed table of contents, listing every vagma and sutta, precedes the individual parts.

To further assist the reader to make sense of the suttas, often terse and abstruse, a copious set of notes is provided. These too have been allocated to the back of each part. The purpose of the notes is to clarify difficult passages in the texts and to make explicit the reading I adopt in the face of competing variants. Though I imagine that for many readers the notes on the readings (especially to Part I) will bring on a spell of vertigo, from a scholarly point of view the discussions they contain are essential, as I must establish the text I am translating. The different recensions of SN often have different readings (especially in the verses), and a small difference in a reading can entail a big difference in the meaning. Hence, to justify my rendering for readers who know Pāli I had to explicate my understanding of the

text's wording. At one point I had considered having two sets of notes for each part, one giving explanations of the suttas and other information of general interest, the other dealing with technical issues primarily aimed at specialists. But it proved too difficult to separate the notes so neatly into two classes, and therefore they are all grouped together. Though a substantial number of the notes will be of little interest to the general reader, I still encourage this type of reader to ferret out the notes concerned with meaning, for these provide helpful guidance to the interpretation of the texts.

Within the notes (as in the introductions) references to the suttas, verses, and other notes have been set in bold. When a sutta reference is followed by volume, page, and (sometimes) line numbers, without textual abbreviation, it should be understood that these are references to the PTS edition of SN. References to Part I are always to Ee1.

Many of the notes are drawn from the Pāli commentaries on SN, of which there are two. One is the authorized commentary, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*, also known by its proper name, the *Sāratthappakāsini* (abbr: Spk), "The Elucidator of the Essential Meaning." This is ascribed to the great Buddhist commentator, Ācariya Buddhaghosa, who came from South India to Sri Lanka in the fifth century C.E. and compiled the commentaries to the canonical texts on the basis of the ancient Sinhala commentaries (no longer extant) that had been preserved at the Mahāvihāra in Anuradhapura. The other commentarial work is the subcommentary, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya-ṭīkā*, also known as the *Sāratthappakāsini-purāna-ṭīkā* (abbr: Spk-pt) and the *Linatthappakāsana* (Part III), "The Elucidation of the Implicit Meaning." This is ascribed to Ācariya Dhammapāla, who may have lived a century or two after Buddhaghosa and resided near Kāñcīpura in South India. The main purpose of the *ṭīkā* is to clear up obscure or difficult points in the *aṭṭhakathā*, but in doing so the author often sheds additional light on the reading and meaning of the canonical text itself.

To keep the notes as concise as possible, the commentaries are generally paraphrased rather than directly quoted, but I use quotation marks to show where I am quoting directly. I have not given volume and page numbers to the citations from Spk and Spk-pt, for I did not have permanent access to the PTS edition of

the former, while the latter is published only in Burmese script. The absence of page numbers, however, should not be a problem, for the commentaries comment on the suttas in direct sequence, and thus those using the PTS edition of Spk should be able to locate any comment easily enough simply by locating the relevant sutta. In the few cases where I cited Spk out of sequence, through inquiry I was able to find out the volume and page number of the PTS edition and I give the full reference in the note.

I should state, as a precaution, that the commentaries explain the suttas as they were understood sometime around the first century C.E. at the latest, at which time the old commentaries drawn upon by Buddhaghosa were closed to further additions. The commentaries view the suttas through the lens of the complex exegetical method that had evolved within the Theravāda school, built up from the interpretations of the ancient teachers welded to a framework constructed partly from the principles of the Abhidhamma system. This exegetical method does not necessarily correspond to the way the teachings were understood in the earliest period of Buddhist history, but it seems likely that its nucleus goes back to the first generation of monks who had gathered around the Buddha and were entrusted with the task of giving detailed, systematic explanations of his discourses. The fact that I cite the commentaries so often in the notes does not necessarily mean that I always agree with them, though where I interpret a passage differently I generally say so. I realize that the notes sometimes repeat things already explained in the introduction to the same part, but in a work of this nature such repetitions can be helpful, particularly as novel ideas briefly treated in the introduction may slip the reader's memory at the time of reading a sutta to which they pertain.

I conclude this preface by acknowledging the contributions that others have made to the completion of this project, for from an early time I was fortunate to have capable help and advice. My most assiduous helper from 1996 onward has been Ven. Bhikkhu Nāṇatusita of the Netherlands, who read through the translation and the notes at two different stages, made numerous suggestions for improvement, and collected information and references that have been incorporated into the notes. He

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also kindly provided me with translations of several of the more important notes to the German translation of SN, particularly of Wilhelm Geiger's notes to the Sagāthāvagga. To Ven. Nāṇatusita, too, belongs most of the credit for the concordances of parallel passages, an impressive undertaking which required an incredible amount of diligent work.

Ven. Vanarata Ānanda Thera read an early draft of the translation and made useful suggestions. Especially helpful were his comments on the verses, an area in which he has special expertise. A number of his perspicacious remarks, including some radical but convincing readings, are incorporated in the notes. Ayyā Nyānasiri read through the verse translations at an early stage and helped to improve the diction, as did Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu at a later stage. Ven. Brahmāli Bhikkhu and Ven. Sujāto Bhikkhu read through most of the prose volumes and made helpful comments, while Ven. Ajahn Brahmavamso, though unable to find the time to read the translation itself, made some valuable suggestions regarding terminology. I benefitted from occasional correspondence with K.R. Norman, Lambert Schmithausen, and Peter Skilling, who provided information and opinions on points that fell within their areas of expertise. I also learnt an enormous amount from Professor Norman's notes to his translations of the Thera- and Therigāthās (*Elders' Verses*, I and II) and the Suttanipāta (*The Group of Discourses*, II). In the final stage, William Pruitt of the Pali Text Society reviewed the entire work, from start to finish, and offered suggestions drawn from his extensive experience as a scholar, translator, and editor. Besides this scholarly help, Tim McNeill of Wisdom Publications and Richard Gombrich of the Pali Text Society gave me constant encouragement. By imposing a strict deadline, Tim ensured that the work finally reached completion. I also thank Carl Yamamoto for his meticulous proofreading of the entire translation.

For all this help I am deeply grateful. For any faults that remain I am fully responsible.

This translation is dedicated to the memory of three eminent Sangha elders with whom I had the fortune to be closely associated during my life as a bhikkhu: my ordination teacher, Ven. Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya Mahānāyaka Thera (with whom I first studied the Sagāthāvagga back in 1973), and my chief

*kalyāṇamittas* (spiritual friends), Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera and Ven. Piyadassi Nāyaka Thera. When I started this translation all three were alive and gave me their encouragement; unfortunately, none lived to see it completed.

Bhikkhu Bodhi  
Forest Hermitage  
Kandy, Sri Lanka

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## Key to the Pronunciation of Pāli

### *The Pāli Alphabet*

Vowels: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, o

#### Consonants:

Gutturals:	k, kh, g, gh, ṅ
Palatals	c, ch, j, jh, ñ
Cerebrals	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ
Dentals	t, th, d, dh, n
Labials	p, ph, b, bh, m
Other	y, r, l, ḷ, v, s, h, ṃ

### *Pronunciation*

a as in "cut"  
ā as in "father"  
i as in "king"  
ī as in "keen"  
u as in "put"  
ū as in "rule"  
e as in "way"  
o as in "home"

Of the vowels, *e* and *o* are long before a single consonant and short before a double consonant. Among the consonants, *ṅ* is always pronounced as in "good," *c* as in "church," *ñ* as in "onion." The cerebrals (or retroflexes) are spoken with the tongue on the roof of the mouth; the dentals with the tongue on the upper teeth. The aspirates—*kh, gh, ch, jh, ṭh, ḍh, th, dh, ph,*

*bh*—are single consonants pronounced with slightly more force than the nonāspirates, e.g., *th* as in “Thomas” (not as in “thin”); *ph* as in “puff” (not as in “phone”). Double consonants are always enunciated separately, e.g., *dd* as in “mad dog,” *gg* as in “big gun.” The pure nasal (*niggahita*) *ṃ* is pronounced like the *ng* in “song.” An *o* and an *e* always carry a stress; otherwise the stress falls on a long vowel—*ā*, *i*, *ū*, or on a double consonant, or on *ṃ*.

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## • General Introduction

The *Samyutta Nikāya* is the third great collection of the Buddha's discourses in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pāli Canon, the compilation of texts authorized as the Word of the Buddha by the Theravāda school of Buddhism. Within the Sutta Piṭaka it follows the Dīgha Nikāya and Majjhima Nikāya, and precedes the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Like the other Pāli Nikāyas, the *Samyutta Nikāya* had counterparts in the canonical collections of the other early Buddhist schools, and one such version has been preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka, where it is known as the *Tsa-a-han-ching*. This was translated from the Sanskrit *Samyuktāgama*, which the evidence indicates belonged to the Sarvāstivāda school. Thus, while the *Samyutta Nikāya* translated in the present work has its locus within the Theravāda canon, it should never be forgotten that it belongs to a body of texts—called the Nikāyas in the Pāli tradition prevalent in southern Asia and the Āgamas in the Northern Buddhist tradition—which stands at the fountainhead of the entire Buddhist literary heritage. It was on the basis of these texts that the early Buddhist schools established their systems of doctrine and practice, and again it was to these texts that later schools also appealed when formulating their new visions of the Buddha's way.

As a source of Buddhist doctrine the *Samyutta Nikāya* is especially rich, for in this collection it is precisely doctrinal categories that serve as the primary basis for classifying the Buddha's discourses. The word *samyutta* means literally “yoked together,” *yutta* (Skt *yukta*) being etymologically related to our English “yoked” and *saṃ* a prefix meaning “together.” The word occurs in the suttas themselves with the doctrinally charged meaning of “fettered” or “bound.” In this sense it is a past participle related

to the technical term *saṃyojana*, “fetter,” of which there are ten that bind living beings to *saṃsāra*, the round of rebirths. But the word *saṃyutta* is also used in a more ordinary sense to mean simply things that are joined or “yoked” together, as when it is said, “Suppose, friend, a black ox and a white ox were yoked together by a single harness or yoke” (35:232; S IV 163,12–13). This is the meaning relevant to the present collection of texts. They are suttas—discourses ascribed to the Buddha or to eminent disciples—yoked or connected together. And what connects them, the “harness or yoke” (*damena vā yottena vā*), are the topics that give their titles to the individual chapters, the *saṃyuttas* under which the suttas fall.

#### THE GROUNDPLAN OF THE SAṂYUTTA NIKĀYA

Despite the immense dimensions of the work, the plan according to which it is constructed is fairly simple and straightforward. The Saṃyutta Nikāya that has come down in the Pāli tradition consists of five major *Vaggas*, parts or “books,” each of which corresponds to a single volume in the Pali Text Society’s roman-script edition of the work. Between them, these five volumes contain fifty-six *saṃyuttas*, chapters based on unifying themes.<sup>1</sup> The longer *saṃyuttas* are in turn divided into subchapters, also called *vaggas*, while the smaller *saṃyuttas* can be considered to consist of a single *vagga* identical with the *saṃyutta* itself. Each *vagga*, in this sense, ideally contains ten suttas, though in actuality the number of suttas in a *vagga* can range from as few as five to as many as sixty. Thus we find the word *vagga*, literally “a group,” used to designate both the five major parts of the entire collection and the subordinate sections of the chapters.<sup>2</sup>

The two largest *saṃyuttas*, the *Khandhasaṃyutta* (22) and the *Salāyatanaṃsaṃyutta* (35), are so massive that they employ still another unit of division to simplify organization. This is the *paññāsaka* or “set of fifty.” This figure is only an approximation, since the sets usually contain slightly more than fifty suttas; indeed, the Fourth Fifty of the *Salāyatanaṃsaṃyutta* contains ninety-three suttas, among them a *vagga* of sixty! Most of these suttas, however, are extremely short, being merely variations on a few simple themes.

Unlike the suttas of the first two Nikāyas, the *Dīgha* and the *Majjhima*, the suttas of SN do not have proper names unanimously agreed upon by all the textual traditions. In the old ola leaf manuscripts the suttas follow one another without a clean break, and the divisions between suttas have to be determined by certain symbolic markings. Each *vagga* ends with a short mnemonic verse called the *uddāna*, which sums up the contents of the *vagga* by means of key words representing its component suttas. In modern printed editions of SN these key words are taken to be the titles of the suttas and are placed at their head. As the *uddānas* often differ slightly between the Sinhalese and the Burmese textual traditions, with the PTS edition following now one and now the other, the names of the suttas also differ slightly between the several editions. Moreover, the most recent Burmese edition, that prepared at the Sixth Buddhist Council, sometimes assigns the suttas titles that are fuller and more meaningful than those derivable from the mnemonic verses. In this translation I have generally followed the Burmese edition.

The titles of the *vaggas* also occasionally differ between the traditions. Whereas the Burmese-script edition often names them simply by way of their numerical position—e.g., as “The First Subchapter” (*paṭhamo vaggo*), etc.—the Sinhala-script Buddha Jayanti edition assigns them proper names. When the titles of the *vaggas* differ in this way, I have placed the numerical name given in the Burmese-script edition first, followed parenthetically by the descriptive name given in the Sinhala-script edition. The titles of the *vaggas* are without special significance and do not imply that all the suttas within that *vagga* are related to the idea expressed by the title. Often these titles are assigned merely on the basis of one sutta within the *vagga*, often the first, occasionally a longer or weightier sutta coming later. The grouping of suttas into *vaggas* also appears largely arbitrary, though occasionally several successive suttas deal with a common theme or exemplify an extended pattern.

In his commentaries to the Pāli Canon, Ācariya Buddhaghosa states that SN contains 7,762 suttas, but the text that has come down to us contains, on the system of reckoning used here, only 2,904 suttas.<sup>3</sup> Due to minor differences in the method of distinguishing suttas, this figure differs slightly from the total of 2,889 counted by Léon Feer on the basis of his roman-script edition.



TABLE 1

## A Breakdown of the Saṃyutta Nikāya by Vaggas and Suttas

(Feer's sutta counts in Ee differing from my own are shown to the far right.)

	Saṃyutta	Vaggas	Suttas	Feer
Part I: <i>Sagāthāvagga</i>	1	8	81	
	2	3	30	
	3	3	25	
	4	3	25	
	5	1	10	
	6	2	15	
	7	2	22	
	8	1	12	
	9	1	14	
	10	1	12	
	11	3	25	
	Total	28	271	
Part II: <i>Nidānavagga</i>	12	9	93	
	13	1	11	
	14	4	39	
	15	2	20	
	16	1	13	
	17	4	43	
	18	2	22	
	19	2	21	
	20	1	12	
	21	1	12	
	Total	27	286	
Part III: <i>Khandhavagga</i>	22	15	159	158
	23	4	46	
	24	4	96	114
	25	1	10	
	26	1	10	
	27	1	10	

	Saṃyutta	Vaggas	Suttas	Feer
Part III:	28	1	10	
<i>Khandhavagga (cont'd)</i>	29	1	50	
	30	1	46	
	31	1	112	
	32	1	57	
	33	1	55	
	34	1	55	
	Total	33	716	733
Part IV:	35	19	248	207
<i>Salāyatanaṅga</i>	36	3	31	29
	37	3	34	
	38	1	16	
	39	1	16	
	40	1	11	
	41	1	10	
	42	1	13	
	43	2	44	
	44	1	11	
	Total	33	434	391
Part V:	45	16	180	
<i>Mahāvagga</i>	46	18	184	187
	47	10	104	103
	48	17	178	185
	49	5	54	
	50	10	108	110
	51	8	86	
	52	2	24	
	53	5	54	
	54	2	20	
	55	7	74	
	56	11	131	
	Total	111	1,197	1,208
Grand Total	232	2,904	2,889	

Table 1 shows how these figures are arrived at, with the divisions into Vāggas, saṃyuttas, and vaggas; the variant figures counted by Feer are given next to my own. The fact that our totals differ so markedly from that arrived at by Buddhaghosa should not cause alarm bells to ring at the thought that some 63% of the original Saṃyutta has been irretrievably lost since the time of the commentaries. For the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, the SN commentary, itself provides us with a check on the contents of the collection at our disposal, and from this it is evident that there are no suttas commented on by Buddhaghosa that are missing from the Saṃyutta we currently possess. The difference in totals must certainly stem merely from different ways of expanding the vaggas treated elliptically in the text, especially in Part V. However, even when the formulaic abridgements are expanded to the full, it is difficult to see how the commentator could arrive at so large a figure.

The five major Vaggas or “books” of the Saṃyutta Nikāya are constructed according to different principles. The first book, the Sagāthāvagga, is unique in being compiled on the basis of literary genre. As the name of the Vagga indicates, the suttas in this collection all contain *gāthās* or verses, though it is not the case (as Feer had assumed at an early point) that all suttas in SN containing verses are included in this Vagga. In many suttas of Part I, the prose setting is reduced to a mere framework for the verses, and in the first saṃyutta even this disappears so that the sutta becomes simply an exchange of verses, presumably between the Buddha and an interlocutor. The other four Vaggas contain major saṃyuttas concerned with the main doctrinal themes of early Buddhism, accompanied by minor saṃyuttas spanning a wide diversity of topics. Parts II, III, and IV each open with a large chapter devoted to a theme of paramount importance: respectively, the chain of causation (i.e., dependent origination, in SN 12), the five aggregates (22), and the six internal and external sense bases (35). Each of these Vaggas is named after its opening saṃyutta and also includes one other saṃyutta dealing with another important topic secondary to the main one: in Part II, the elements (14); in Part III, philosophical views (24); and in Part IV, feeling (36). The other saṃyuttas in each of these collections are generally smaller and thematically lighter, though within these we can also find texts of great depth and power.

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Part V tackles themes that are all of prime importance, namely, the various groups of training factors which, in the post-canonical period, come to be called the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*sattatiṃsa bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*). The Vagga concludes with a saṃyutta on the original intuition around which the entire Dhamma revolves, the Four Noble Truths. Hence this book is called the Mahāvagga, the Great Book, though at one point it might have also been called the Maggavagga, the Book of the Path (and indeed the Sanskrit version translated into Chinese was so named).

The organization of SN, from Parts II to V, might be seen as corresponding roughly to the pattern established by the Four Noble Truths. The Nidānavagga, which focuses on dependent origination, lays bare the causal genesis of suffering, and is thus an amplification of the second noble truth. The Khandhavagga and the Saḷāyatanavagga highlight the first noble truth, the truth of suffering; for in the deepest sense this truth encompasses all the elements of existence comprised by the five aggregates and the six internal and external sense bases (see 56:13, 14). The Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta (43), coming towards the end of the Saḷāyatanavagga, discusses the unconditioned, a term for the third noble truth, Nibbāna, the cessation of suffering. Finally, the Mahāvagga, dealing with the path of practice, makes known the way to the cessation of suffering, hence the fourth noble truth. If we follow the Chinese translation of the Skt Saṃyuktāgama, the parallelism is still more obvious, for this version places the Khandhavagga first and the Saḷāyatanavagga second, followed by the Nidānavagga, thus paralleling the first and second truths in their proper sequence. But this version assigns the Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta to the end of the Mahāvagga, perhaps to show the realization of the unconditioned as the fruit of fulfilling the practice.

I said above that what makes the suttas of this collection “connected discourses” are the themes that unite them into fixed saṃyuttas. These, which we might consider the “yokes” or binding principles, constitute the groundplan of the collection, which would preserve its identity even if the saṃyuttas had been differently arranged. There are fifty-six such themes, which I have distinguished into four main categories: doctrinal topics, specific persons, classes of beings, and types of persons. Of the two

saṃyuttas that do not fall neatly into this typology, the Vana-saṃyutta (9) is constructed according to a fixed scenario, generally a monk being admonished by a woodland deity to strive more strenuously for the goal; the Opammasaṃyutta (20) is characterized by the use of an extended simile to convey its message.

In Table 2 (A) I show how the different saṃyuttas can be assigned to these categories, giving the total numbers of suttas in each class and the percentage which that class occupies in the whole. The results of this tabulation should be qualified by noting that the figures given are based on a calculation for the whole Saṃyutta Nikāya. But the Sagāthāvagga is so different in character from the other Vaggas that its eleven saṃyuttas skew the final results, and thus to arrive at a more satisfactory picture of the overall nature of the work we might omit this Vagga. In Table 2 (B) I give the results when the Sagāthāvagga is not counted. Even these figures, however, can convey a misleading picture, for the classification is made by way of titles only, and these provide a very inadequate indication of the contents of the actual saṃyutta. The Rāhulasaṃyutta and the Rāhasaṃyutta, for example, are classified under "Specific Person," but they deal almost exclusively with the three characteristics and the five aggregates, respectively, and give us absolutely no personal information about these individuals; thus their content is properly doctrinal rather than biographical. Moreover, of the eleven chapters named after specific persons, nine are almost entirely doctrinal. Only saṃyuttas 16 and 41, respectively on Mahākassapa and Citta the householder, include material that might be considered of biographical interest. Since the chapters on the main doctrinal topics are invariably much longer than the other chapters, the number of *pages* dealing with doctrine would be immensely greater than those dealing with other themes.

#### THE SAṂYUTTA NIKĀYA AND THE SAṂYUKTĀGAMA

The Pāli commentaries, and even the canonical Cullavagga, give an account of the First Buddhist Council which conveys the impression that the participating elders arranged the Sutta Piṭaka into essentially the form in which it has come down to us today, even with respect to the precise sequence of texts. This is extremely improbable, and it is also unlikely that the council

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TABLE 2  
Thematic Analysis of the Saṃyutta Nikāya

<i>A. Including the Sagāthāvagga</i>				
Topics	Saṃyuttas	Total	Percentage	
Doctrinal Topic	12 13 14 15 17 22 24	26	46%	
	25 26 27 34 35 36 43			
	44 45 46 47 48 49 50			
	51 53 54 55 56			
Specific Person	3 4 8 11 16 18 19 23	15	27%	
	28 33 38 39 40 41 52			
Class of Beings	1 2 6 10 29 30 31 32	8	14%	
Type of Person	5 7 21 37 42	5	9%	
Other	9 20	2	4%	
<i>B. Excluding the Sagāthāvagga</i>				
Topics	Saṃyuttas	Total	Percentage	
Doctrinal Topic	12 13 14 15 17 22 24	26	58%	
	25 26 27 34 35 36 43			
	44 45 46 47 48 49 50			
	51 53 54 55 56			
Specific Person	16 18 19 23 28 33 38	11	24%	
	39 40 41 52			
Class of Beings	29 30 31 32	4	9%	
Type of Person	21 37 42	3	7%	
Other	20	1	2%	

established a fixed and final recension of the Nikāyas. The evidence to the contrary is just too massive. This evidence includes the presence in the canon of suttas that could only have appeared after the First Council (e.g., MN Nos. 84, 108, 124); signs of extensive editing internal to the suttas themselves; and, a weighty factor, the differences in content and organization

between the Pāli Nikāyas and the North Indian Āgamas preserved in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. It is much more likely that what took place at the First Council was the drafting of a comprehensive scheme for classifying the suttas (preserved only in the memory banks of the monks) and the appointment of an editorial committee (perhaps several) to review the material available and cast it into a format conducive to easy memorization and oral transmission. Possibly too the editorial committee, in compiling an authorized corpus of texts, would have closely considered the purposes their collections were intended to serve and then framed their guidelines for classification in ways designed to fulfil these purposes. This is a point I will return to below. The distribution of the texts among groups of reciters (*bhāṇakas*), charged with the task of preserving and transmitting them to posterity, would help to explain the divergences between the different recensions as well as the occurrence of the same suttas in different Nikāyas.<sup>4</sup>

Comparison of the Pāli SN with the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama is particularly instructive and reveals a remarkable correspondence of contents arranged in a different order. I already alluded just above to some differences in organization, but it is illuminating to examine this in more detail.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese version contains nine major Vaggas (following Anesaki, I use the Pāli terms and titles for consistency). The first is the Khandhavagga (our III), the second the Saḷāyatanavagga (our IV), the third the Nidānavagga (our II), which latter also contains the Saccasaṃyutta (56) and the Vedanāsaṃyutta (36), departing markedly from SN in these allocations. Then follows a fourth part named Sāvaka-vagga, without a counterpart in the Pāli version but which includes among others the Sāriputta- (28), Moggallāna- (40), Lakkhaṇa- (19), Anuruddha- (52), and Cittasaṃyuttas (41). The fifth part, whose Pāli title would be Maggavagga, corresponds to SN Mahāvagga (our V), but its saṃyuttas are arranged in a sequence that follows more closely the canonical order of the sets making up the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment: Satipaṭṭhāna (47), Indriya (48), Bala (50), Bojjhaṅga (46), and Magga (45); this part also includes the Ānāpānasati- (54) and Sotāpattisaṃyuttas (55), while a series of small chapters at the end includes a Jhānasaṃyutta (53) and an Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta (43). The sixth Vagga of the Saṃyuktāgama is without a Pāli

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parallel but contains the Opammaṣaṃyutta (20) and a collection of suttas on sick persons which draws together texts distributed among various chapters of SN. Then, as the seventh book, comes the Sagāthāvagga (our I), with twelve saṃyuttas—eleven of the Pāli version but in a different order and with the addition of the Bhikkhusaṃyutta (21), which in this recension must contain only suttas with verses. Finally comes a Buddha- or Tathāgatavagga, which includes the Kassapa- (16) and Gāmanisaṃyuttas (42), and an Assasaṃyutta, “Connected Discourses on Horses.” This last chapter includes suttas that in the Pāli Canon are found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

#### THE ROLE OF THE SAṂYUTTA AMONG THE FOUR NIKĀYAS

Prevalent scholarly opinion, fostered by the texts themselves, holds that the principal basis for distinguishing the four Nikāyas is the length of their suttas. Thus the largest suttas are collected into the Dīgha Nikāya, the middle length suttas into the Majjhima Nikāya, and the shorter suttas are distributed between the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara Nikāyas, the former classifying its suttas thematically, the latter by way of the number of items in terms of which the exposition is framed. However, in an important groundbreaking study, Pāli scholar Joy Manné has challenged the assumption that length alone explains the differences between the Nikāyas.<sup>6</sup> By carefully comparing the suttas of DN with those of MN, Manné concludes that the two collections are intended to serve two different purposes within the Buddha’s dispensation. In her view, DN was primarily intended for the purpose of propaganda, to attract converts to the new religion, and thus is aimed mainly at non-Buddhists favourably disposed to Buddhism; MN, in contrast, was directed inwards towards the Buddhist community and its purpose was to extol the Master (both as a real person and as an archetype) and to integrate monks into the community and the practice. Manné also proposes that “each of the first four Nikāyas came about in order to serve a distinct need and purpose in the growing and developing Buddhist community” (p. 73). Here we shall briefly address the question what purposes may have been behind the compilation of SN and AN, in contradistinction to the other two Nikāyas.

In approaching this question we might first note that the suttas of these two Nikāyas provide only minimal circumstantial background to the delivery of the Buddha's discourses. With rare exceptions, in fact, a background story is completely absent and the *nidāna* or "setting" simply states that the sutta was spoken by the Blessed One at such and such a locale. Thus, while DN and MN are replete with drama, debate, and narrative, with DN especially abounding in imaginative excursions, here this decorative framework is missing. In SN the whole setting becomes reduced to a single sentence, usually abbreviated to "At Sāvathī, in Jeta's Grove," and by the fourth book even this disappears. Apart from the *Sagāthāvagga*, which is in a class of its own, the other four books of SN have little ornamentation. The suttas themselves are usually issued as direct proclamations on the doctrine by the Buddha himself; sometimes they take the form of consultations with the Master by a single monk or group of monks; occasionally they are framed as discussions between two eminent monks. Many suttas consist of little more than a few short sentences, and it is not unusual for them simply to ring the permutations on a single theme. When we reach Part V whole chains of suttas are reduced to mere single words in mnemonic verses, leaving to the reciter (or to the modern reader) the task of blowing up the outline and filling in the contents. This indicates that the suttas in SN (as also in AN) were, as a general rule, not targeted at outsiders or even at the newly converted, but were intended principally for those who had already turned for refuge to the Dhamma and were deeply immersed in its study and practice.

On the basis of its thematic arrangement, we might postulate that, in its most distinctive features as a collection (though certainly not in all particulars), SN was compiled to serve as the repository for the many short but pithy suttas disclosing the Buddha's radical insights into the nature of reality and his unique path to spiritual emancipation. This collection would have served the needs of two types of disciples within the monastic order. One were the doctrinal specialists, those monks and nuns who were capable of grasping the deepest dimensions of wisdom and took upon themselves the task of clarifying for others the subtle perspectives on reality opened up by the Buddha's teachings. Because SN brings together in its major

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samyuttas the many abstruse, profound, and delicately nuanced suttas on such weighty topics as dependent origination, the five aggregates, the six sense bases, the factors of the path, and the Four Noble Truths, it would have been perfectly suited for those disciples of intellectual bent who delighted in exploring the deep implications of the Dhamma and in explaining them to their spiritual companions. The second type of disciples for whom SN seems to have been designed were those monks and nuns who had already fulfilled the preliminary stages of meditative training and were intent on consummating their efforts with the direct realization of the ultimate truth. Because the suttas in this collection are vitally relevant to meditators bent on arriving at the undeceptive "knowledge of things as they really are," they could well have formed the main part of a study syllabus compiled for the guidance of insight meditators.

With the move from SN to AN, a shift in emphasis takes place from comprehension to personal edification. Because the shorter suttas that articulate the philosophical theory and the main structures of training have found their way into SN, what have been left for inclusion in AN are the short suttas whose primary concern is practical. To some extent, in its practical orientation, AN partly overlaps with SN *Mahāvagga*, which treats the various groups of path factors. To avoid unnecessary duplication the redactors of the canon did not include these topics again in AN under their numerical categories, thereby leaving AN free to focus on those aspects of the training not incorporated in the repetitive sets. AN also includes a notable proportion of suttas addressed to lay disciples, dealing with the mundane, ethical, and spiritual concerns of life within the world. This makes it especially suitable as a text for the edification of the laity.

From this way of characterizing the two Nikayas, we might see SN and AN as offering two complementary perspectives on the Dhamma, both inherent in the original teaching. SN opens up to us the profound perspective reached through contemplative insight, where the familiar consensual world of persons and things gives way to the sphere of impersonal conditioned phenomena arising and perishing in accordance with laws of conditionality. This is the perspective on reality that, in the next stage in the evolution of Buddhist thought, will culminate in the *Abhidhamma*. Indeed, the connection between SN and the

evidence of practicing monks

Abhidhamma appears to be a close one, and we might even speculate that it was the nonsubstantialist perspective so prominent in SN that directly gave rise to the type of inquiry that crystallized in the Abhidhamma philosophy. The close relationship between the two is especially evident from the second book of the Pāli Abhidhamma Piṭaka, the *Vibhaṅga*, which consists of eighteen treatises each devoted to the analysis of a particular doctrinal topic. Of these eighteen, the first twelve have their counterparts in SN.<sup>7</sup> Since most of these treatises include a "Suttanta Analysis" (*suttantabhājanīya*) as well as a more technical "Abhidhamma Analysis" (*abhidhammabhājanīya*), it is conceivable that the Suttanta Analyses of the *Vibhaṅga* were the primordial seeds of the Abhidhamma and that it was among the specialists in SN that the idea arose of devising a more technical expository system which eventually came to be called the Abhidhamma.

The Aṅguttara Nikāya serves to balance the abstract philosophical point of view so prominent in SN with an acceptance of the conventional world of consensual realities. In AN, persons are as a rule not reduced to mere collections of aggregates, elements, and sense bases, but are treated as real centres of living experience engaged in a heartfelt quest for happiness and freedom from suffering. The suttas of this collection typically address these needs, many dealing with the practical training of monks and a significant number with the everyday concerns of lay followers. The numerical arrangement makes it particularly convenient for use in formal instruction, and thus it could be easily drawn upon by senior monks when teaching their pupils and by preachers when preparing sermons for the lay community. AN is replete with material that serves both purposes, and even today within the living Theravāda tradition it continues to fulfil this dual function.

The preceding attempt to characterize each Nikāya in terms of a ruling purpose should not be understood to imply that their internal contents are in any way uniform. To the contrary, amidst a welter of repetition and redundancy, each displays enormous diversity, somewhat like organisms of the same genera that exhibit minute specific differences absolutely essential to their survival. Further, it remains an open question, particularly in the case of SN and AN, whether their blueprints were

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drawn up with a deliberate pedagogical strategy in mind or whether, instead, the method of arrangement came first and their respective tactical applications followed as a matter of course from their groundplans.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE CANON

Due partly to the composition of the suttas out of blocks of standardized, transposable text called pericopes, and partly to common points of focus throughout the Sutta Piṭaka, a considerable amount of overlapping can be discovered between the contents of the four Nikāyas. In the case of SN, parallels extend not only to the other three Nikāyas but to the Vinaya Piṭaka as well. Thus we find three SN suttas of great importance also recorded in the Vinaya Mahāvagga, represented as the first three discourses given by the Buddha at the dawn of his ministry: the Dhammacakkappavattana, the Anattalakkhaṇa, and the Ādittapariyāya (56:11; 22:59; 35:28).<sup>8</sup> In the Vinaya, too, there are parallels to the SN suttas on the Buddha's encounters with Māra (4:4, 5), on his hesitation to teach the Dhamma (6:1), on his first meeting with Anāthapiṇḍika (10:8), on the secession of Devadatta (17:35), and on the tormented spirits seen by Mahāmoggallāna (19:1-21). While it is possible that both the Vinaya and SN received this material via separate lines of oral transmission, in view of the fact that the narrative portions of the Vinaya Piṭaka appear to stem from a later period than the Nikāyas, we might conjecture that the redactors of the Vinaya drew freely upon texts preserved by the Saṃyutta reciters when composing the frameworks for the disciplinary injunctions.

SN includes as individual suttas material which, in DN, is embedded in larger suttas. The most notable instances of this are segments of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (e.g., at 6:15; 47:9; 47:12; 51:10), but we find as well a few snippets shared by the Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta (47:1, 2; 45:8) and a short (*cūḷa*) version of the Mahānidāna Sutta (12:60). The latter shares with its larger counterpart (DN No. 15) only the opening paragraph but thereafter diverges in a completely different direction. Again, any solution to the question of borrowing can only be hypothetical.

The compilers of the canon seem to have laid down stringent rules governing the allocation of texts between SN and AN,

intended to avoid extensive reduplication when a doctrinal theme is also a numerical set. Still, within the bounds set by that condition, a certain amount of overlapping has taken place between the two Nikāyas. They hold in common the suttas on Rohitassa's search for the end of the world (2:26), on the lion's roar (22:78), on the ten qualities of the stream-enterer (12:41 = 55:28), on the death of Kokālika (6:9–10), on the five hindrances (46:55, but in AN without the section on the enlightenment factors), as well as several large blocks of text that in SN do not constitute separate suttas.

It is, however, between SN and MN that the boundary appears to have been the most permeable, for SN contains five whole suttas also found in MN (22:82; 35:87, 88, 121; 36:19), as well as the usual common text blocks. We cannot know whether this dual allocation of the suttas was made with the general consent of the redactors responsible for the whole Sutta Piṭaka or came about because the separate companies of reciters responsible for the two Nikāyas each thought these suttas fitted best into their own collections. But in view of the fact that in SN several suttas appear in two saṃyuttas, thus even in the same Nikāya, the first alternative is not implausible. Suttas from SN have also found their way into the smaller works of the Khuddaka Nikāya—the Suttanipāta, the Udāna, and the Itivuttaka—while the correspondence between verses is legion, as can be seen from Concordance 1 (B).

#### LITERARY FEATURES OF THE SAṂYUTTA

Of the four Nikāyas, SN seems to be the one most heavily subjected to "literary embellishment." While it is possible that some of the variations stemmed from the Buddha himself, it also seems plausible that many of the more minute elaborations were introduced by the redactors of the canon. I wish to call attention to two distinctive features of the collection which bear testimony to this hypothesis. We might conveniently call them "template parallelism" and "auditor-setting variation." The texts that exhibit these features are collated in Concordances 3 and 4 respectively. Here I will explain the principles that lie behind these editorial devices and cite a few notable examples of each.

Template parallels are suttas constructed in accordance with

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the same formal pattern but which differ in the content to which this pattern is applied. The template is the formal pattern or mould; the template sutta, a text created by applying this mould to a particular subject, the "raw material" to be moulded into a sutta. Template parallels cut across the division between saṃyuttas and show how the same formula can be used to make identical statements about different categories of phenomena, for example, about the elements, aggregates, and sense bases (*dhātu, khandha, āyatana*), or about path factors, enlightenment factors, and spiritual faculties (*maggāṅga, bojjhaṅga, indriya*). The recurrence of template parallels throughout SN gives us an important insight into the structure of the Buddha's teaching. It shows that the teaching is constituted by two intersecting components: a formal component expressed by the templates themselves, and a material component provided by the entities that are organized by the templates. The application of the templates to the material components instructs us how the latter are to be treated. Thus we are made to see, from the template suttas, that the constituent factors of existence are to be understood with wisdom; that the defilements are to be abandoned; and that the path factors are to be developed.

The templates are in turn sometimes subsumed at a higher level by what we might call a paradigm, that is, a particular perspective offering us a panoramic overview of the teaching as a whole. Paradigms generate templates, and templates generate suttas. Thus all one need do to compose different suttas is to subject various types of material to the same templates generated by a single paradigm.

SN abounds in examples of this. One prevalent paradigm in the collection, central to the Dhamma, is the three characteristics of existence: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). This paradigm governs whole series of suttas both in SN 22 and SN 35, the royal saṃyuttas of Parts III and IV, respectively; for it is above all the five aggregates and the six pairs of sense bases that must be seen with insight in order to win the fruits of liberation. The "three characteristics paradigm" generates four common templates: impermanent, etc., in the three times; the simple contemplation of impermanence, etc.; impermanent, etc., through causes and conditions; and, most critical in the Buddha's soteriological plan, the "what is imper-

manent is suffering" template, which sets the three characteristics in relation to one another.

Another major paradigm is the triad of gratification, danger, and escape (*assāda, ādinava, nissaraṇa*), which generates three templates. At AN I 258–60 we find these templates used to generate three suttas in which the material content is the world as a whole (*loka*). SN, apparently drawing upon certain ways of understanding the concept of the world, contains twelve suttas churned out by these templates—three each in the saṃyuttas on the elements and the aggregates (14:31–33; 22:26–28), and six in the saṃyutta on the sense bases (35:13–18; six because the internal and external sense bases are treated separately). This paradigm is in turn connected to another, on the qualities of true ascetics and brahmins, and together they give birth to three more recurrent templates on how true ascetics and brahmins understand things: by way of the gratification triad; by way of the origin pentad (the gratification triad augmented by the origin and passing away of things); and by way of the noble-truth tetrad (modelled on the Four Noble Truths: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation). These templates generate suttas on the four elements, gain and honour, the five aggregates, feelings, and the faculties. The last template is also applied several times to the factors of dependent origination, but strangely they are all missing in the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta.

The main cause of suffering, according to the Buddha, is craving (*taṇhā*), also known as desire and lust (*chanda-rāga*). In SN the task of removing craving serves as a paradigm which generates another set of templates, arrived at by splitting and then recombining the terms of the compound: abandon desire, abandon lust, abandon desire and lust. These are each connected separately to whatever is impermanent, whatever is suffering, and whatever is nonself (intersecting with the three characteristics paradigm), thereby giving rise to nine templates. These are then extended to the aggregates and to the internal and external sense bases, generating respectively nine and eighteen suttas (22:137–45; 35:168–85).

Some templates must have emerged from the conversations into which the monks were drawn in their everyday lives, such as the one based on the question why the holy life is lived under the Blessed One (35:81, 152; 38:4; 45:5, 41–48). Part V, on the

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groups pertaining to the path, employs still new templates, though without a single dominant paradigm. Many of the templates occur in the repetition series, which are elaborated in full only in the Moggasāyutta and thereafter abbreviated in mnemonic verses. But more substantive templates generate suttas in the bodies of these saṃyuttas, which will be discussed at greater length in the introduction to Part V.

If we closely inspect the concordance of template parallels, we would notice that certain templates are not employed to generate suttas in domains where they seem perfectly applicable. Thus, as noted above, we do not find the "ascetics and brahmins" templates applied to the six sense bases, or the "noble and emancipating" template applied to the five spiritual faculties, or the "seven fruits and benefits" template applied to the four establishments of mindfulness. This raises the intriguing question whether these omissions were made by deliberate design, or because the applications were overlooked, or because suttas got lost in the process of oral transmission. To arrive at cogent hypotheses concerning this question we would have to compare the Pāli recension of SN with the Chinese translation of the Saṃyuktāgama, which would no doubt be a major undertaking requiring a rare combination of skills.

The second distinctive editorial technique of SN is what I call "auditor-setting variation." This refers to suttas that are identical (or nearly identical) in content but differ in regard to the person to whom they are addressed, or in the protagonist involved (in a sutta involving a "plot"), or in the circumstances under which they are spoken. The most notable example of this device is the sutta on how a bhikkhu attains or fails to attain Nibbāna, which occurs seven times (at 35:118, 119, 124, 125, 126, 128, 131), in exactly the same words, but addressed to different auditors, including the deva-king Sakka and the gandhabba Pañcasikha. As the Buddha must have reiterated many suttas to different inquirers, the question arises why this one was selected for such special treatment. Could it have been a way of driving home, to the monks, what they must do to win the goal of the holy life? Or were there more mundane motives behind the redundancy, such as a desire to placate the families of important lay supporters?

Under this category fall several instances where a sutta is



spoken by the Buddha a first time in response to a question from Ānanda, a second time to Ānanda on his own initiative, a third time in response to a question from a group of bhikkhus, and a fourth time to a group of bhikkhus on his own initiative (e.g., 36:15–18; 54:13–16). Again, the Rādhasaṃyutta includes two vaggas of twelve suttas each identical in all respects except that in the first (23:23–34) Rādha asks for a teaching while in the second (23:35–46) the Buddha takes the initiative in speaking.

A third literary embellishment, not quite identical with auditor-setting variation, is the inclusion of chains of suttas that ring the permutations on a simple idea by using different phrasing. Thus the Diṭṭhisāṃyutta (24) contains four “trips” (*gamaṇa*) on speculative views differing only in the framework within which the exposition of views is encased (partial exception being made of the first trip, which for some unclear reason lacks a series of views included in the other three). In the Vacchagottasaṃyutta (33), the wanderer so named approaches the Buddha five times with the same question, about the reason why the ten speculative views arise in the world, and each time the answer is given as not knowing one of the five aggregates; each question and answer makes a separate sutta. Not content with this much, the compilers of the canon seem to have felt obliged to make it clear that each answer could have been formulated using a different synonym for lack of knowledge. Thus the saṃyutta is built up out of ten variants on the first pentad, identical in all respects except for the change of synonyms. The Jhānasāṃyutta (34) exhibits still another literary flourish, the “wheel” (*cakka*) of permutations, whereby a chain of terms is taken in pairwise combinations, exhausting all possibilities.

#### TECHNICAL NOTES

Here I will discuss a few technical matters pertaining to the translation, emphasizing particularly why my renderings here sometimes differ from those used in MLDB. For the sake of precision, I usually refer to SN by volume, page, and line numbers of Ee (Ee1 in references to Part I), and use the saṃyutta and sutta numbers only when the whole sutta is relevant.<sup>9</sup>

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#### THE REPETITIONS

Readers of the Pāli suttas are invariably irked, and sometimes dismayed, by the ponderous repetitiveness of the texts. In SN these are more blatant than in the other Nikāyas, even to the extent that in whole vaggas the suttas might differ from one another only in regard to a single word or phrase. Besides this type of reiterative pattern, we also come across the liberal use of stock definitions, stereotyped formulas, and pericopes typical of the Nikāyas as a whole, stemming from the period when they were transmitted orally. It is difficult to tell how much of the repetition stems from the Buddha himself, who as an itinerant teacher must have often repeated whole discourses with only slight variations, and how much is due to zealous redactors eager to ring every conceivable change on a single idea and preserve it for posterity. It is hard, however, not to suspect that the latter have had a heavy hand in the redaction of the texts.

To avoid excessive repetitiveness in the translation I have had to make ample use of elisions. In this respect I follow the printed editions of the Pāli texts, which are also highly abridged, but a translation intended for a contemporary reader requires still more compression if it is not to risk earning the reader's wrath. On the other hand, I have been keen to see that nothing essential to the original text, including the flavour, has been lost due to the abridgement. The ideals of considerateness to the reader and fidelity to the text sometimes make contrary demands on a translator.

The treatment of repetition patterns in which the same utterance is made regarding a set of items is a perpetual problem in translating Pāli suttas. When translating a sutta about the five aggregates, for example, one is tempted to forgo the enumeration of the individual aggregates and instead turn the sutta into a general statement about the aggregates as a class. To my mind, such a method veers away from proper translation towards paraphrase and thus risks losing too much of the original text. My general policy has been to translate the full utterance in relation to the first and last members of the set, and merely to enumerate the intermediate members separated by ellipsis points. Thus, in a sutta about the five aggregates, I render the statement in full only for form and consciousness, and in between have “feeling

... perception ... volitional formations ...," implying thereby that the full statement likewise applies to them. With the bigger sets I often omit the intermediate terms, rendering the statement only for the first and last members.

This approach has required the frequent use of ellipsis points, a practice which also invites criticism. Several consulting readers thought I might improve the aesthetic appearance of the page (especially in Part IV) by rephrasing repetitive passages in a way that would eliminate the need for ellipsis points. I accepted this suggestion in regard to repetitions in the narrative framework, but in texts of straight doctrinal exposition I adhered to my original practice. The reason is that I think it an important responsibility of the translator, when translating passages of doctrinal significance, to show exactly where text is being elided, and for this ellipsis points remain the best tool at hand.

#### DHAMMA

Rather than embark on the quest for a single English rendering that can capture all the meanings of this polyvalent Pāli word, I have settled for the more pragmatic approach of using different renderings intended to match its different applications.<sup>10</sup> When the word denotes the Buddha's teaching, I have retained the Pāli "Dhamma," for even "teaching" fails to convey the idea that what the Buddha teaches as the Dhamma is not a system of thought original to himself but the fundamental principles of truth, virtue, and liberation discovered and taught by all Buddhas throughout beginningless time. This is the Dhamma venerated by the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, which they look upon as their own standard and guide (see 6:2). From an internal "emic" point of view, the Dhamma is thus more than a particular religious teaching that has appeared at a particular epoch of human history. It is the timeless law in which reality, truth, and righteousness are merged in a seamless unity, and also the conceptual expression of this law in a body of spiritual and ethical teachings leading to the highest goal, Nibbāna, which is likewise comprised by the Dhamma. The word "Dhamma," however, can also signify teachings that deviate from the truth, including the erroneous doctrines of the

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"outside" teachers. Thus the Jain teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta is said to "teach the Dhamma to his disciples" (IV 317,25)—certainly not the Buddha's teaching.

In one passage I render Dhamma as "righteousness" (at the Se counterpart of IV 303,21). This is in the epithet *dhammarāja* used for a universal monarch, where "king of righteousness" fits better than "king of the Dhamma," the significance the epithet has relative to the Buddha. The corresponding adjective, *dhammika*, is "righteous."

When *dhamma* occurs as a general term of reference, often in the plural, I usually render it "things." As such, the word does not bear the narrow sense of concrete material objects but includes literally *every-thing*, such as qualities, practices, acts, and relationships. Thus the four factors of stream-entry are, as *dhammas*, things; so too are the twelve factors of dependent origination, the five aggregates, the six pairs of sense bases, and the diverse practices leading to enlightenment. Used in the plural, *dhammā* can also mean teachings, and so I render it at III 225,9 foll., though the exact sense there is ambiguous and the word might also mean the things that are taught rather than the teachings about them. One expression occurring in two suttas (II 58,3-4; IV 328,21-22), *iminā dhammena*, can be most satisfactorily rendered "by this principle," though here *dhamma* points to the Dhamma as the essential teaching. Again, at I 167,9 (= I 168,25, 173,10), we have *dhamme sati*, "when this principle exists," a rule of conduct followed by the Buddha.

When plural *dhammā* acquires a more technical nuance, in contexts with ontological overtones, I render it "phenomena." For instance, *paṭicca-samuppannā dhammā* are "dependently arisen phenomena" (II 26,7), and each of the five aggregates is *loke lokadhamma*, "a world-phenomenon in the world" that the Buddha has penetrated and taught (III 139,22 foll.). When the word takes on a more psychological hue, I render it "states." The most common example of this is in the familiar pair *kusalā dhammā*, wholesome states, and *akusalā dhammā*, unwholesome states (found, for example, in the formula for right effort; V 9,17-27). The enlightenment factor *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga* is said to be nurtured by giving careful attention to pairs of contrasting mental states (among them wholesome and unwholesome states; V 66,18), and thus I render it "the enlightenment

factor of discrimination of states." But since the *dhammas* investigated can also be the four objective supports of mindfulness (V 331–32), *dhammavicaya* might have been translated "discrimination of phenomena." Sometimes *dhammā* signifies traits of character more persistent than transient mental states; in this context I render it "qualities," e.g., Mahākassapa complains that the bhikkhus "have qualities which make them difficult to admonish" (II 204,3–4).

As a sense base and element, the *dhammāyatana* and *dhamma-dhātu* are the counterparts of the *manāyatana*, the mind base, and the *manoviññānadhātu*, the mind-consciousness element. The appropriate sense here would seem to be that of ideas and mental images, but the commentaries understand *dhammas* in these contexts to include not only the objects of consciousness but its concomitants as well. Thus I translate it "mental phenomena," which is wide enough to encompass both these aspects of experience. As the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, objective base of mindfulness, *dhammā* is often translated "mind-objects." So I rendered it in MLDB, but in retrospect this seems to me unsatisfactory. Of course, any existent can become an object of mind, and thus all *dhammas* in the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* are necessarily mind-objects; but the latter term puts the focus in the wrong place. I now understand *dhammas* to be phenomena in general, but phenomena arranged in accordance with the categories of the Dhamma, the teaching, in such a way as to lead to a realization of the essential Dhamma embodied in the Four Noble Truths.

Finally, *-dhamma* as a suffix has the meaning "is subject to" or "has the nature of." Thus all dependently arisen phenomena are "subject to destruction, vanishing, fading away, and cessation" (*khayadhamma*, *vayadhamma*, *virāgadhamma*, *nirodhadhamma*; II 26,9 foll.). The five aggregates are "of impermanent nature, of painful nature, of selfless nature" (*aniccadhamma*, *dukkhadhamma*, *anattadhamma*; III 195–96).

#### SANKHĀRĀ

In MLDB I had changed Ven. Nāṇamoli's experimental rendering of *saṅkhārā* as "determinations" back to his earlier choice, "formations." Aware that this word has its own drawbacks, in preparing this translation I had experimented with several alter-

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natives. The most attractive of these was "constructions," but in the end I felt that this term too often led to obscurity. Hence, like the land-finding crow which always returns to the ship when land is not close by (see Vism 657; Ppn 21:65), I had to fall back on "formations," which is colourless enough to take on the meaning being imparted by the context. Sometimes I prefixed this with the adjective "volitional" to bring out the meaning more clearly.

*Saṅkhārā* is derived from the prefix *saṃ* (= con), "together," and the verb *karoti*, "to make." The noun straddles both sides of the active-passive divide. Thus *saṅkhāras* are both things which put together, construct, and compound other things, and the things that are put together, constructed, and compounded.

In SN the word occurs in five major doctrinal contexts:

(1) As the second factor in the formula of dependent origination, *saṅkhāras* are the kammically active volitions responsible, in conjunction with ignorance and craving, for generating rebirth and sustaining the forward movement of *saṃsāra* from one life to the next. *Saṅkhārā* is synonymous with *kamma*, to which it is etymologically related, both being derived from *karoti*. These *saṅkhāras* are distinguished as threefold by their channel of expression, as bodily, verbal, and mental (II 4,8–10, etc.); they are also divided by ethical quality into the meritorious, demeritorious, and imperturbable (II 82,9–13). To convey the relevant sense of *saṅkhārā* here I render the term "volitional formations." The word might also have been translated "activities," which makes explicit the connection with *kamma*, but this rendering would sever the connection with *saṅkhārā* in contexts other than dependent origination, which it seems desirable to preserve.

(2) As the fourth of the five aggregates, *saṅkhārā* is defined as the six classes of volitions (*cha cetanākāyā*, III 60,25–28), that is, volition regarding the six types of sense objects. Hence again I render it volitional formations. But the *saṅkhārakkhandha* has a wider compass than the *saṅkhārā* of the dependent origination series, comprising all instances of volition and not only those that are kammically active. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the commentaries the *saṅkhārakkhandha* further serves as an umbrella category for classifying all mental concomitants of consciousness apart from feeling and perception. It thus comes to include all wholesome, unwholesome, and variable mental

factors mentioned but not formally classified among the aggregates in the Sutta Piṭaka.

(3) In the widest sense, *saṅkhārā* comprises all conditioned things, everything arisen from a combination of conditions. In this sense all five aggregates, not just the fourth, are *saṅkhāras* (see III 132,22-27), as are all external objects and situations (II 191,11-17). The term here is taken to be of passive derivation—denoting what is conditioned, constructed, compounded—hence I render it simply “formations,” without the qualifying adjective. This notion of *saṅkhārā* serves as the cornerstone of a philosophical vision which sees the entire universe as constituted of conditioned phenomena. What is particularly emphasized about *saṅkhāras* in this sense is their impermanence. Recognition of their impermanence brings insight into the unreliable nature of all mundane felicity and inspires a sense of urgency directed towards liberation from saṃsāra (see 15:20; 22:96).

(4) A triad of *saṅkhāras* is mentioned in connection with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, and the mental formation (IV 293,7-28). The first is in-and-out breathing (because breath is bound up with the body); the second, thought and examination (because by thinking one formulates the ideas one expresses by speech); the third, perception and feeling (because these things are bound up with the mind). Two of these terms—the bodily formation and the mental formation—are also included in the expanded instructions on mindfulness of breathing (V 311,21-22; 312,4-5).

(5) The expression *padhānasāṅkhārā* occurs in the formula for the four *iddhipādas*, the bases for spiritual power. The text explains it as the four right kinds of striving (V 268,8-19). I render it “volitional formations of striving.” Though, strictly speaking, the expression signifies energy (*virīya*) and not volition (*cetanā*), the qualifier shows that these formations occur in an active rather than a passive mode.

Apart from these main contexts, the word *saṅkhāra* occurs in several compounds—*āyusaṅkhāra* (II 266,19; V 262,22-23), *jivita-sāṅkhāra* (V 152,29-153,2) *bhavasāṅkhāra* (V 263,2)—which can be understood as different aspects of the life force.

The past participle connected with *saṅkhārā* is *saṅkhata*, which I

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translate “conditioned.” Unfortunately I could not render the two Pāli words into English in a way that preserves the vital connection between them: “formed” is too specific for *saṅkhata*, and “conditions” too wide for *saṅkhārā* (and it also encroaches on the domain of *paccaya*). If “constructions” had been used for *saṅkhārā*, *saṅkhata* would have become “constructed,” which preserves the connection, though at the cost of too stilted a translation. Regrettably, owing to the use of different English words for the pair, a critically important dimension of meaning in the suttas is lost to view. In the Pāli we can clearly see the connection: the *saṅkhāras*, the active constructive forces instigated by volition, create and shape conditioned reality, especially the conditioned factors classified into the five aggregates and the six internal sense bases; and this conditioned reality itself consists of *saṅkhāras* in the passive sense, called in the commentaries *saṅkhata-sāṅkhārā*.

Further, it is not only this connection that is lost to view, but also the connection with Nibbāna. For Nibbāna is the *asaṅkhata*, the unconditioned, which is called thus precisely because it is neither made by *saṅkhāras* nor itself a *saṅkhāra* in either the active or passive sense. So, when the texts are taken up in the Pāli, we arrive at a clear picture in fine focus: the active *saṅkhāras* generated by volition perpetually create passive *saṅkhāras*, the *saṅkhata dhammas* or conditioned phenomena of the five aggregates (and, indirectly, of the objective world); and then, through the practice of the Buddha’s path, the practitioner arrives at the true knowledge of conditioned phenomena, which disables the generation of active *saṅkhāras*, putting an end to the constructing of conditioned reality and opening up the door to the Deathless, the *asaṅkhata*, the unconditioned, which is Nibbāna, final liberation from impermanence and suffering.

#### NĀMARŪPA

In MLDB, I also had changed Ven. Nānamoli’s “name-and-form” back to his earlier rendering, “mentality-materiality.” In some respects the latter is doctrinally more accurate, but it is also unwieldy, particularly when translating verse, and thus here I return to “name-and-form.” The compound was of pre-Buddhistic origins and is used in the Upaniṣads to denote the

differentiated manifestation of *brahman*, the nondual reality. For the sages of the Upaniṣads, *nāmarūpa* is the manifestation of *brahman* as multiplicity, apprehended by the senses as diversified appearances or forms, and by thought as diversified names or concepts (the assignment of names and concepts being understood as grounded in objective reality rather than as the end-product of a purely subjective process). The Buddha adopted this expression and invested it with a meaning consonant with his own system. Here it becomes the physical and cognitive sides of individual existence. In the expression *bahiddhā nāmarūpa*, "external name-and-form" (at II 24,2), we seem to find a vestige of the original meaning—the world as distinguished according to its appearances and names—but divested of the monistic implications.

In the Buddha's system, *rūpa* is defined as the four great elements and the form derived from them. Form is both internal to the person (as the body with its senses) and external (as the physical world). The Nikāyas do not explain derived form (*upādāya rūpaṃ*), but the Abhidhamma analyses it into some twenty-four kinds of secondary material phenomena which include the sensitive substances of the sense faculties and four of the five sense objects (the tactile object is identified with three of the great elements—earth, heat, and air—which each exhibit tangible properties): Though I render *nāma* as name, this should not be taken too literally. *Nāma* is the assemblage of mental factors involved in cognition: feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention (*vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phassa, manasikāra*; II 3,34-35). These are called "name" because they contribute to the process of cognition by which objects are subsumed under conceptual designations.

It should be noted that in the Nikāyas, *nāmarūpa* does not include consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Consciousness is its condition, and the two are mutually dependent, like two sheaves of reeds leaning one against the other (II 114,17-19). Consciousness can operate only in dependence on a physical body (*rūpa*) and in conjunction with its constellation of concomitants (*nāma*); conversely, only when consciousness is present can a compound of material elements function as a sentient body and the mental concomitants participate in cognition. Occasionally the texts speak of the "descent of consciousness" (*viññāṇassa avakkanti*)

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serving as a condition for name-and-form (II 91,14-15); this means that the arrival of the current of consciousness from the past existence into the new one is the necessary condition for the arising of a new psychophysical organism at conception. Sometimes too the texts speak of the descent of name-and-form (*nāmarūpassa avakkanti*, II 66,12, 90,19, 101,13); this denotes the beginning of sentient life when the current of consciousness, arriving from the previous existence, becomes established under the fresh conditions.

#### NIBBĀNA, PARINIBBĀNA

As is well known, *nibbāna* literally means the extinction of a fire. In popular works on Buddhism, *nibbāna* plain and simple is often taken to signify Nibbāna as experienced in life, *parinibbāna* Nibbāna attained at death. This is a misinterpretation. Long ago E.J. Thomas pointed out (possibly on the basis of a suggestion by E. Kuhn) that the prefix *pari-* converts a verb from the expression of a state into the expression of the achievement of an action, so that the corresponding noun *nibbāna* becomes the state of release, *parinibbāna* the attaining of that state.<sup>11</sup> The distinction does not really work very well for the verb, as we find both *parinibbāyati* and *nibbāyati* used to designate the act of attaining release, but it appears to be fairly tenable in regard to the nouns. (In verse, however, we do sometimes find *nibbāna* used to denote the event, for example in the line *pajjotass' eva nibbānaṃ* at v. 612c.) Words related to both *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna* designate both the attaining of release during life through the experience of full enlightenment, and the attaining of final release from conditioned existence through the breakup of the physical body of death. Thus, for instance, the verb *parinibbāyati* is commonly used to describe how a bhikkhu achieves release while alive (e.g., at II 82,20; III 54,3; IV 23,8-9, etc.) and also to indicate the passing away of the Buddha or an arahant (e.g., at I 158,23; V 161,25).

The past participle forms, *nibbuta* and *parinibbuta*, are from a different verbal root than the nouns *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna*. The former is from *nir + vr*, the latter from *nir + vā*. The noun appropriate to the participles is *nibbuti*, which occasionally occurs in the texts as a synonym for *nibbāna* but with a function that is

more evocative (of tranquillity, complete rest, utter peace) than systematic. (It seems no prefixed noun *parinibbuti* is attested to in Pāli.) At an early time the two verb forms were conflated, so that the participle *parinibbuta* became the standard adjective used to denote one who has undergone *parinibbāna*. Like the verb, the participle is used in apposition to both the living Buddha or arahant (I 1,21, 187,8) and the deceased one (I 122,13, 158,24). Possibly, however, *parinibbuta* is used in relation to the living arahant only in verse, while in prose its technical use is confined to one who has expired. In sutta usage, even when the noun *parinibbāna* denotes the passing away of an arahant (particularly of the Buddha), it does not mean “Nibbāna after death.” It is, rather, the *event* of passing away undergone by one who has already attained Nibbāna during life.

The suttas distinguish between two elements of Nibbāna: the Nibbāna element with residue (*sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*) and the Nibbāna element without residue (*anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*)—the residue (*upādisesa*) being the compound of the five aggregates produced by prior craving and kamma (It 38–39). The former is the extinction of lust, hatred, and delusion attained by the arahant while alive; the latter is the remainderless cessation of all conditioned existence that occurs with the arahant’s death. In the commentaries the two elements of Nibbāna are respectively called *kilesaparinibbāna*, the quenching of defilements at the attainment of arahantship, and *khandhaparinibbāna*, the quenching of the continuum of aggregates with the arahant’s demise. Though the commentaries treat the two Nibbāna elements and the two kinds of *parinibbāna* as interchangeable and synonymous, in sutta usage it may be preferable to see the two kinds of *parinibbāna* as the events which give access to the two corresponding Nibbāna elements. *Parinibbāna*, then, is the act of quenching; *nibbāna*, the state of quenchedness.

To explain the philology of a term is not to settle the question of its interpretation. What exactly is to be made of the various explanations of Nibbāna given in the Nikāyas has been a subject of debate since the early days of Buddhism, with the ground divided between those who regard it as the mere extinction of defilements and cessation of existence and those who understand it as a transcendental (*lokuttara*) ontological reality. In SN some suttas explain Nibbāna as the destruction of lust, hatred,

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and delusion, which emphasizes the experiential psychological dimension; elsewhere it is called the unconditioned, which seems to place the stress on ontological transcendence. The Theravāda commentators regard Nibbāna as an unconditioned element.<sup>12</sup> They hold that when Nibbāna is called the destruction of the defilements (of lust, hatred, and delusion, etc.) and the cessation of the five aggregates, this requires interpretation. Nibbāna itself, as an existent, is unborn, unmade, unbecome, unconditioned (see Ud 80–81). It is in dependence on this element (*taṃ āgama*), by arriving at it, that there takes place the destruction of “the defilements and release from conditioned existence. Nibbāna itself, however, is not reducible to these two events, which are, in their actual occurrence, conditioned events happening in time. On this interpretation, the two Nibbāna elements are seen as stages in the full actualization of the unconditioned Nibbāna, not simply as two discrete events.

In the present work I leave *nibbāna* untranslated, for the term is too rich in evocative meaning and too defiant of conceptual specification to be satisfactorily captured by any proposed English equivalent. I translate *parinibbāna* as “final Nibbāna,” since the noun form usually means the passing away of an arahant (or the Buddha), final release from conditioned existence; sometimes, however, its meaning is ambiguous, as in the statement “the Dhamma [is] taught by the Blessed One for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging (*arupādāparinibbānattham*)” (IV 48,78), which can mean either Nibbāna during life or the full cessation of existence.

The verb *parinibbāyati* perhaps could have been incorporated into English with “nibbanize,” which would be truest to the Pāli, but this would be too much at variance with current conventions. Thus when the verb refers to the demise of the Buddha or an arahant, I render it “attains final Nibbāna,” but when it designates the extinguishing of defilements by one who attains enlightenment, I render it simply “attains Nibbāna.” We also find a personal noun form, *parinibbāyī*, which I render “an attainer of Nibbāna,” as it can be construed in either sense. In prose the past participle *parinibbuta*, used as a doctrinal term, always occurs with reference to a deceased arahant and so it is translated “has attained final Nibbāna.” In verse, it can take on either meaning; when it describes a living arahant (or the

Buddha) I translate it more freely as "fully quenched." The unprefix form *nibbuta* does not always carry the same technical implications as *parinibbuta*, but can mean simply "peaceful, satisfied, at ease," without necessarily establishing that the one so described has attained Nibbāna.<sup>13</sup> At I 24,11 and II 279,8 it has this implication; at I 236,21 it seems to mean simply peaceful; at III 43, in the compound *tadaṅganibbuta*, it definitely does not imply Nibbāna, for the point there is that the monk has only approximated to the real attainment of the goal. Cognates of *parinibbāna* appear in colloquial speech with a nondoctrinal sense; for example, both *parinibbāyati* and *parinibbuta* are used to describe the taming of a horse (at MN I 446,8-10). But even here they seem to be used with a "loaded meaning," since the horse simile is introduced to draw a comparison with a monk who attains arahantship.

#### OTHER CHANGES

In MLDB I rendered *vitakka* and *vicāra* respectively as "applied thought" and "sustained thought." In this translation they become "thought" and "examination." The latter is surely closer to the actual meaning of *vicāra*. When *vitakka* is translated as "thought," however, a word of caution is necessary. In common usage, *vitakka* corresponds so closely to our "thought" that no other rendering seems feasible; for example, in *kāmaavitakka*, sensual thought, or its opposite, *nekkhammavitakka*, thought of renunciation. When, however, *vitakka* and *vicāra* occur as constituents of the first jhāna, they do not exercise the function of discursive thinking characteristic of ordinary consciousness. Here, rather, *vitakka* is the mental factor with the function of applying the mind to the object, and *vicāra* the factor with the function of examining the object nondiscursively in order to anchor the mind in the object.

*Bhava*, in MLDB, was translated "being." In seeking an alternative, I had first experimented with "becoming," but when the shortcomings in this choice were pointed out to me I decided to return to "existence," used in my earlier translations. *Bhava*, however, is not "existence" in the sense of the most universal ontological category, that which is shared by everything from the dishes in the kitchen sink to the numbers in a mathematical

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equation. Existence in the latter sense is covered by the verb *atthi* and the abstract noun *atthitā*. *Bhava* is concrete sentient existence in one of the three realms of existence posited by Buddhist cosmology, a span of life beginning with conception and ending in death. In the formula of dependent origination it is understood to mean both (i) the active side of life that produces rebirth into a particular mode of sentient existence, in other words rebirth-producing kamma; and (ii) the mode of sentient existence that results from such activity.

*Sakkāya* is a term for the five aggregates as a collective whole (III 159,10-13). The word is derived from *sat* + *kāya*, and literally means "the existing body," the assemblage of existent phenomena that serve as the objective basis of clinging. Most translators render it "personality," a practice I followed in MLDB (departing from Ven. Nāṇamoli, who rendered it, too literally in my view, "embodiment"). But since, under the influence of modern psychology, the word "personality" has taken on connotations quite foreign to what is implied by *sakkāya*, I now translate it as "identity" (a suggestion made to me by Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu). *Sakkāya-ditṭhi* accordingly becomes "identity view," the view of a self existing either behind or among the five aggregates.

*Nibbidā*, in MLDB, was translated "disenchantment." However, the word or its cognates is sometimes used in ways which suggest that something stronger is intended. Hence I now translate the noun as "revulsion" and the corresponding verb *nibbindati* as "to experience revulsion." What is intended by this is not a reaction of emotional disgust, accompanied by horror and aversion, but a calm inward turning away from all conditioned existence as comprised in the five aggregates, the six sense bases, and the first noble truth. Revulsion arises from knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūtañānadassana*), and naturally leads to dispassion (*virāga*) and liberation (*vimutti*; on the sequence, see 12:23).

## NOTES TO GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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- 1 The Burmese textual tradition of SN, followed by the Pali Text Society edition, counts fifty-six saṃyuttas, but the Sinhalese tradition counts fifty-four. The difference comes about because the Sinhalese tradition treats the Abhisamayasaṃyutta (our 13) as a subchapter of the Nidāna-saṃyutta (12), and the Vedanāsaṃyutta (our 36) as a subchapter of the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta (35). Neither of these allocations seems justifiable, as these minor saṃyuttas have no explicit thematic connection with the topics of the larger saṃyuttas into which the Sinhalese tradition has incorporated them.
  - 2 I use "Vagga" to refer to the major parts, and "vagga" to refer to the subchapters. Since the Oriental scripts in which the texts are preserved do not have distinct capital and lower case letters, they use the same word for both without orthographic differentiation.
  - 3 Buddhaghosa's figure is given at Sp I 18,9-10, Sv I 23,16-17, and Spk I 2,25-26.
  - 4 Norman makes this point in *Pāli Literature*, p. 31.
  - 5 For the arrangement of the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama I rely on Anesaki, "The Four Buddhist Āgamas in Chinese."
  - 6 "Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas." See especially pp. 71-84.
  - 7 The twelve chapters of the *Vibhaṅga* with counterparts in SN are as follows: (1) Khandhavibhaṅga (= SN 22); (2) Āyatana- (= 35); (3) Dhātu- (= 14); (4) Sacca- (= 56); (5) Indriya- (= 48); (6) Paṭicca-samuppāda- (= 12); (7) Satipatthāna- (= 47); (8) Sammappadhāna- (= 49); (9) Iddhipāda- (= 51); (10) Bojjhaṅga- (= 46); (11) Magga- (= 45); (12) Jhāna- (= 53).
  - 8 My references here are all to SN (by saṃyutta and sutta). To find the parallels, use Concordance 2 (B), pp. 1984-85.
  - 9 What follows partly overlaps with MLDB, pp. 52-58, but as my handling of certain terms differs from that of the earlier work, a full discussion is justified.
  - 10 Norman takes a similar approach to his translation of *dhamma* in EV I. See his discussion of the word at EV I, n. to 2 (p. 118).
  - 11 *History of Buddhist Thought*, p. 121, n. 4.
  - 12 This is clearly maintained in the debate on Nibbāna recorded at Vism 507-9 (Ppn 16:67-74). See too the long extract from the *Paramatthamañjūsā*, Dhammapāla's commentary on Vism, translated by Nāṇamoli at Ppn pp. 825-26, n. 18.
  - 13 For a play on the two senses of *nibbuta*, see the Bodhisatta's reflections before his great renunciation at Ja I 60-61.



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Part I  
The Book with Verses  
(*Sagāthāvagga*)

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## Introduction

The *Sagāthāvagga* is so called because all the suttas in this book contain verses, at least one, usually more. The Vagga is divided into eleven saṃyuttas containing a total of 271 suttas. Most of these saṃyuttas are subdivided into several vaggas, usually of ten suttas each. In four saṃyuttas (3, 4, 6, 11), the last vagga contains only five suttas, half the standard number, and these are therefore called "pentads" (*pañcaka*). Four saṃyuttas are not divided into separate vaggas (5, 8, 9, 10), and thus may be considered as made up of a single vagga. I have numbered the suttas consecutively within each saṃyutta starting from 1, with the number within the vagga given in parenthesis. The recent PTS edition of the *Sagāthāvagga* (Ee2) numbers the suttas consecutively through the entire collection, from 1 to 271.

The number of verses varies from edition to edition, depending on differences in readings and on alternative ways of grouping *pādas* or lines into stanzas; for a sequence of twelve *pādas* might be divided into either two stanzas of six lines each or three stanzas of four lines each. Ee2 is the only one that numbers the verses, and this edition has 945; of these I have not included three (vv. 70, 138, 815), for reasons explained in the notes (nn. 53, 96, 573). Many of the verses occur several times within the Saṃyutta Nikāya, usually within the *Sagāthāvagga*, occasionally elsewhere, as can be seen from Concordance 1 (A). The verses also have extensive parallels elsewhere in the Pāli Canon. A large number are shared by such texts as the Thera- and Therīgāthās, the Suttanipāta, the Dhammapada, and the Jātakas, as well as by the other Nikāyas. They are also quoted in paracanonical texts such as the *Milindapañha*, the *Peṭakopadesa*, and

the *Nettipakaraṇa*. A significant number have parallels in the vast corpus of non-Pāli Indian Buddhist literature, such as the Patna and Gāndhāri Dharmapadas, the *Udānavarga*, the *Mahāvastu*, and even the much later *Yogācārabhūmi*. All these "external" parallels are shown in Concordance 1 (B). Doubtlessly some of the verses were not original to the suttas in our collection but belonged to the vast, free floating mass of Buddhist didactic verse which the compilers of the texts pinned down to specific contexts by providing them with narrative settings such as those found in the *Sagāthāvagga*.

Of the eleven saṃyuttas in this Vagga, eight revolve around encounters between the Buddha (or his disciples) and beings from other planes of existence. Since we will repeatedly run across beings from nonhuman planes in the other Vaggas too, a short summary of the Buddhist picture of the sentient universe will help us to identify them and to understand their place in early Buddhist cosmology. (See Table 3, which gives a visual representation of this cosmology.)

TABLE 3

The Thirty-One Planes of Existence according to  
Traditional Theravāda Cosmology  
(see CMA 5:3–7)

*The Formless Realm* (4 planes)

- (31) Base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception
- (30) Base of nothingness
- (29) Base of infinity of consciousness
- (28) Base of infinity of space

*The Form Realm* (16 planes)

*Fourth jhāna plane: Five Pure Abodes*

- (27) Akaniṭṭha realm
- (26) Clear-sighted realm
- (25) Beautiful realm
- (24) Serene realm
- (23) Durable realm

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- Ordinary fourth jhāna plane*  
(22) Nonperceptient beings  
(21) Devas of great fruit

- Third jhāna plane*  
(20) Devas of steady aura  
(19) Devas of measureless aura  
(18) Devas of minor aura

- Second jhāna plane*  
(17) Devas of streaming radiance  
(16) Devas of measureless radiance  
(15) Devas of minor radiance

- First jhāna plane*  
(14) Mahābrahmā realm  
(13) Brahmā's ministers  
(12) Brahmā's assembly

*The Sense-Sphere Realm* (11 planes)

- Seven good destinations*  
Six sense-sphere heavenly realms  
(11) Paranimmitavasavatti devas  
(10) Nimmānarati devas  
(9) Tusita devas  
(8) Yāma devas  
(7) Tāvatisa devas  
(6) Four Great Kings  
Human realm  
(5) Human realm

- Four bad destinations*  
(4) Host of asuras  
(3) Domain of ghosts  
(2) Animal realm  
(1) Hell realms

The early Buddhist texts envisage a universe with three principal tiers subdivided into numerous planes. The lowest tier is the



sense-sphere realm (*kāmadhātu*), so called because the driving force within this realm is sensual desire. The sense-sphere realm (in the oldest cosmology) contains ten planes: the hells (*niraya*), planes of extreme torment; the animal realm (*tiracchānayoṇi*); the domain of *petas* or ghosts (*pettivisaya*), shade-like spirits subject to various kinds of misery; the human realm (*manussaloka*); and six sense-sphere heavens (*sagga*) inhabited by the *devas*, celestial beings who enjoy far greater happiness, beauty, power, and glory than we know in the human realm. Later tradition adds the *asuravisaya*, the domain of titans or antigods, to the bad destinations, though in the Nikāyas they are depicted as occupying a region adjacent to the Tāvātimsa heaven, from which they often launch invasions against the *devas*.

Above the sense-sphere realm is the form realm (*rūpadhātu*), where gross material form has vanished and only the subtler kinds of form remain. The realm is divided into four main tiers with several planes in each. The inhabitants of these planes are also *devas*, though to distinguish them from the gods of the sensuous heavens they are usually called *brahmās*. The life spans in the various brahmā planes increase exponentially, being far longer than those in the sensuous heavens, and sensual desire has largely abated. The prevalent mode of experience here is meditative rather than sensory, as these planes are the ontological counterparts of the four *jhānas* or meditative absorptions. They include the five "Pure Abodes" (*suddhāvāsa*), spheres of rebirth accessible only to nonreturners.

Beyond the form realm lies an even more exalted sphere of existence called the formless realm (*arūpadhātu*). The beings in this realm consist solely of mind, without a material basis, as physical form is here entirely absent. The four planes that make up this realm, successively more subtle, are the ontological counterparts of the four *ārūppas* or formless meditative attainments, after which they are named: the base of the infinity of space, the base of the infinity of consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception.

The suttas often compress this elaborate cosmology into a simpler scheme of five destinations (*pañcagati*): the hells, the animal realm, the domain of ghosts, the human realm, and the deva world. The last includes all the many deva planes of the three realms. The first three are called the plane of misery (*apāya-*

*bhūmi*), the nether world (*vinipāta*), or the bad destinations (*duggati*); the human realm and the deva planes are collectively called the good destinations (*sugati*). Rebirth into the plane of misery is the fruit of unwholesome kamma, rebirth into the good destinations the fruit of wholesome kamma. Beyond all realms and planes of existence is the unconditioned, Nibbāna, the final goal of the Buddha's teaching.

### 1. DEVATĀSAMĪYUTTA

*Devatā* is an abstract noun based on *deva*, but in the Nikāyas it is invariably used to denote particular celestial beings, just as the English word "deity," originally an abstract noun meaning the divine nature, is normally used to denote the supreme God of theistic religions or an individual god or goddess of polytheistic faiths. Though the word is feminine, the gender comes from the abstract suffix *-tā* and does not necessarily mean the *devatās* are female. The texts rarely indicate their sex, though it seems they can be of either sex and perhaps sometimes beyond sexual differentiation.

For Buddhism the *devas* are not immortal gods exercising a creative role in the cosmic process. They are simply elevated beings, blissful and luminous, who had previously dwelt in the human world but had been reborn in the celestial planes as the fruit of their meritorious deeds. With rare exceptions they are just as much in bondage to delusion and desire as human beings, and they equally stand in need of guidance from the Enlightened One. The Buddha is the "teacher of *devas* and humans" (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*), and though squarely established in the human world he towers above the most exalted deities by reason of his supreme wisdom and perfect purity.

The *devas* usually come to visit the Buddha in the deep stillness of the night, while the rest of the world lies immersed in sleep. The *Devatāsamyutta* gives us a record of their conversations. Sometimes the *devas* come to recite verses in praise of the Master, sometimes to ask questions, sometimes to request instruction, sometimes to win approval of their views, sometimes even to challenge or taunt him. On approaching they almost always bow down to him in homage, for the Buddha is their spiritual and moral superior. Not to bow down to him, as

some devas do (see 1:35), is provocative, a deliberate withholding of due respect.

Each of the four Nikāyas opens with a sutta of deep significance. Though the first sutta of SN is very short, it is rich in implications. In this case a devatā comes to the Buddha to ask how he “crossed the flood,” that is, how he attained deliverance, and in his reply the Buddha points to the “middle way” as the key to his attainment. This answer conveys the essential spirit of the Dhamma, which avoids all extremes in views, attitudes, and conduct. The commentary draws out the ramifications of the Buddha’s statement with a list of seven extremes, philosophical and practical, transcended by the middle way.

The following suttas in this saṃyutta cover a wide spectrum of subjects without any particular logic in their sequence. They range from the simple to the profound, from the commonplace to the sublime, from the humorous to the stern. The exchanges discuss such ethical practices as giving, service to others, and noninjury; the difficulties of renunciation and the life of meditation; the call for earnest effort; the sorrows of human existence and the need for deliverance. There are also suttas on the bliss and equanimity of the arahant, and a few which touch on his transcendental stature. In most suttas the prose portion serves no other function than to establish a framework for the conversation, which eventually falls away leaving only an exchange of verses with the speakers’ identities understood. But we occasionally find brief stories, such as that of the female devatā who tried to seduce the bhikkhu Samiddhi (1:20), or of the “faultfinding devas” who accused the Buddha of hypocrisy (1:35), or of the visit paid to the Buddha by a group of devas when his foot was injured by a stone splinter (1:38).

Usually the personal identity of the devatā is not revealed. An exception is the pair of suttas where the two Kokanadā sisters, daughters of the weather god Pajjunna, visit the Buddha and praise him and his Dhamma (1:39–40). Sometimes verses spoken by an anonymous deity recur elsewhere with the identity specified; for example, v. 22 reappears as v. 461, ascribed to Māra the Evil One; vv. 156–59 reappear as vv. 312–15, ascribed to Anātha-piṇḍika, the celestial reincarnation of the great philanthropist. It is also rare for the suttas to assign the devas to particular realms, but there are exceptions, such as those on the “extolling of the

good” host of devas (*satullapakāyikā devā*; 1:31–34, etc.) and the one on the devas of the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsakāyikā devā*; 1:37). The commentary, cited in the notes, often provides more background information.

When the devatā does not ask a question but voices an opinion, a contrast is usually established between the viewpoint of the deity, generally valid from within his or her limited horizons, and the viewpoint of the Buddha, who sees things far beyond the ken of the devas (see, e.g., vv. 3–6). Sometimes a group of devas express their opinions, which the Buddha surpasses with his own more profound contribution (vv. 78–84, 95–101). In several suttas the verses are not spoken in the context of a conversation but express the personal views of the deva, which the Buddha tacitly endorses (vv. 136–40), and two verses are simple paeans of praise to the Blessed One (vv. 147, 148). Beginning with v. 183, the suttas assume a standard format, with the devas posing a series of riddles which the Buddha answers to their satisfaction. A memorable example of this is the riddle about the type of killing that the Buddha approves of, to which the answer is the killing of anger (vv. 223–24). In one sutta we find a gentle touch of humour: a devatā has asked the Buddha a series of questions, apparently mundane in intent, but before the Blessed One can reply another devatā breaks in and gives his own answers, which remain at the mundane level. Then the Buddha replies, lifting the dialogue to the transcendent plane (vv. 229–31). Because of its varied content and the piquancy of its verses, within the Theravāda tradition, at least in Sri Lanka, the Devatāsaṃyutta is extremely popular as a source of texts to be drawn upon for sermons.

## 2. DEVAPUTTASAṂYUTTA

The *devaputtas*, or “sons of the devas,” are young devas newly arisen in their respective heavenly planes; *devaduhitās*, “daughters of the devas,” are also mentioned in the commentary but none appear in this saṃyutta. The commentary says these beings are reborn spontaneously in the laps of the devas. While the devatās in the preceding saṃyutta remain mostly anonymous, the young devas are always identified by name, and it is surprising to find that several of them—or at least their verses—

have already appeared in the *Devatāsaṃyutta* (see 2:3, 4, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27). This suggests that the dividing line between the two classes of deities is not a hard and fast one, just as the dividing line between an adult and an adolescent is not hard and fast. A relatively large proportion of the verses in this chapter focus on the monastic training, substantially more than in the *Devatāsaṃyutta*. The texts themselves do not drop any hints as to why this should be so; at least there are none that are readily visible.

Several suttas raise points of special interest from a doctrinal perspective. We meet, for example, the young deva *Dāmali* who thought that the arahant must still "strive without weariness," until the Buddha told him that the arahant had completed his task and need not strive further (2:5). The commentary says this sutta is almost unique in that the Buddha here does *not* speak in praise of effort. Again, we meet *Tāyana*, whose verses on exertion are applauded by the Blessed One and, the next morning, are commended by him to the monks (2:8). The two suttas on the capture of the moon god *Candimā* and the sun god *Śuriya* include verses that must have functioned as charms for terminating lunar and solar eclipses (2:9, 10); in Sri Lanka they are included in the *Maha Pirit Pota*, "The Great Book of Protection," made up of suttas and other chants recited for spiritual and physical protection. We also meet *Subrahmā*, whose single verse is one of the pithiest expressions in world literature of the anguish at the heart of the human condition (2:17). The story of *Rohitassa*, who tried to reach the end of the world by travelling, elicits from the Buddha a momentous reply about where the world and its end are ultimately to be found (2:26). In this *saṃyutta* we also meet two young devas named *Veṅhu* and *Siva* (at 2:12 and 2:21), who may be early prototypes of the Indian gods *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva* (the Sanskrit forms of their names); our text, however, apparently dates from a period before they became the chief deities of theistic devotional Hinduism. The last sutta in the chapter (2:30) introduces us to a group of young devas who were formerly disciples of the Buddha's rivals on the Indian scene, *Pūraṇa Kassapa*, *Makkhali Gosāla*, and *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*, teachers whose views had been unequivocally rejected by the Buddha. It is thus perplexing that their disciples should have been reborn in heaven, especially when the first two teachers propagated such doctrines as moral anarchism and

fatalism. But the conclusion reached in the sutta is that such teachers were as far from the stature of true holy men as the jackal is from the lion.

### 3. KOSALASAṂYUTTA

This chapter introduces us to King *Pasenadi* of *Kosala*. According to the Buddhist texts, *Pasenadi* was deeply devoted to the Buddha and often sought his counsel, though there is no record of him reaching any stage of awakening (and thus medieval Sri Lankan tradition holds that he was a *bodhisatta*, who does not attain enlightenment so that he might continue fulfilling the perfect virtues that culminate in Buddhahood). *Pasenadi* had been led to the Buddha by his wife, Queen *Mallikā*, whose devotion to the Master he had previously resented. The story of how *Mallikā* convinced him of the Buddha's wisdom is related in MN No. 87; MN No. 89 gives us a moving account of the king's last meeting with the Master when they were both in their eightieth year. The first sutta of the *Kosala-saṃyutta* apparently records *Pasenadi*'s first meeting with the Blessed One, after his confidence had been aroused by *Mallikā*'s ruse. Here the Buddha is described as young, and when the king questions the claim that such a youthful ascetic can be perfectly enlightened, the Buddha replies with a series of verses that dispels the king's doubts and inspires him to go for refuge.

Unlike the first two *saṃyuttas*, the present one employs substantial prose backgrounds to the verses, and often the stanzas merely restate metrically the moral of the Buddha's discourse. Though the topics discussed are not especially profound, they are almost all relevant to the busy lay person faced with the difficult challenge of living a moral life in the world. Especially noteworthy is the stress they lay on the need to adhere unflinchingly to the path of rectitude amidst the world's temptations. Several suttas (3:4, 5) show how easy it is to fall away from righteous standards, especially in an age like the Buddha's when, as in our own time, stiff competition for wealth, position, and power was driving hallowed ethical values out of circulation. The remedy against temptation is diligence (*appamāda*), and when the Buddha extols diligence to the king the word does not mean, as it does in a monastic context, constant devotion to

meditation, but persistence in the performance of meritorious deeds. For a man like Pasenādi, a happy rebirth rather than Nibbāna is the immediate goal.

The king's conversation with Mallikā, in which they both admit they cherish themselves more than anyone else (3:8), elicits from the Buddha a verse which gives an ethical slant to a metaphysical thesis found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, also occurring in a conversation between husband and wife, that of all things the self is the most precious. This raises the interesting question whether the close correspondence between the two is sheer coincidence (not impossible) or the result of a deliberate reworking by the Buddha of the old *Upaniṣad*. On another occasion we see the king display lack of acumen in his assessment of ascetics (3:11)—perhaps a hint that his commitment to the Dhamma was not unwavering—and the Buddha's response offers astute counsel on how to judge a person's character.

In this *saṃyutta* we even find, from the Master's golden lips, enlightened advice for losing weight (3:12), while two other suttas provide an historical perspective on the conflict between Kosaia and Magadha, with reflections on war and peace (3:14–15). Of timely interest is the Buddha's verse explaining to the king that a woman can turn out better than a man (3:16). Elsewhere the Buddha rejects the idea, propagated by the brahmins, that birth is an important criterion of spiritual worth, stressing instead that the true marks of spiritual nobility are ethical purity and wisdom (3:24).

A theme that recurs throughout this *saṃyutta* is the inevitability of death and the inexorable operation of the law of *kamma*, which ensures that good and bad actions meet with due recompense. Beings pass from bright states to dark ones and from dark states to bright ones depending on their actions (3:21). All that we take with us when we die are our good and bad deeds, and thus we should be sure to accumulate merits, for in the next world these are "the support for living beings" (3:4, 20, 22). Among several texts on the inevitability of death, the most memorable is the last sutta in the chapter (3:25), with its startling parable of the mountains advancing from all quarters, crushing everything in their way.

#### 4. MĀRASAMYUTTA

Māra is the Evil One of Buddhism, the Tempter and Lord of Sensuality bent on distracting aspirants from the path to liberation and keeping them trapped in the cycle of repeated birth and death. Sometimes the texts use the word "Māra" in a metaphorical sense, as representing the inward psychological causes of bondage such as craving and lust (22:63–65) and the external things to which we become bound, particularly the five aggregates themselves (23:11–12). But it is evident that the thought world of the suttas does not conceive Māra only as a personification of humankind's moral frailty, but sees him as a real evil deity out to frustrate the efforts of those intent on winning the ultimate goal. The proof of this lies in his pursuit of the Buddha and the arahants *after* their enlightenment, which would not be credible if he were conceived of merely as a psychological projection.

The *Mārasamyutta* opens in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree soon after the Buddha has attained the supreme enlightenment. Here Māra challenges the Blessed One's claim to have reached the goal. He taunts him for abandoning the path of self-mortification (4:1), tries to frighten him by assuming horrific shapes (4:2), and seeks to break his equanimity by displaying beautiful and hideous forms (4:3). For the Buddha to triumph in these contests he need only call Māra's bluff, to announce that he knows the adversary before him is none other than the Evil One. Then Māra must disappear, frustrated and mournful.

Māra also appears as the cynic who denies that mortals can attain perfect purity (4:4, 15). On several occasions he tries to confound the monks while they are listening to the Buddha speak, but each time the Buddha calls his number (4:16, 17, 19). On another occasion Māra tries to tempt the Master with the lure of worldly power, but the Buddha staunchly rejects this (4:20). Especially impressive is the *Godhika Sutta* (4:23), where the bhikkhu Godhika, afflicted with an illness that obstructs his meditative progress, plans to take his own life. Māra presents himself before the Buddha, pleading with him to discourage his disciple from such folly, but the Master extols devotion to the goal even at the cost of life. At the end of the sutta Māra is searching vainly for the rebirth-consciousness of Godhika,

unaware that the monk had attained Nibbāna and expired "with consciousness unestablished."

The last two suttas in this saṃyutta take us back to the site of the enlightenment. Here we see first Māra and then Māra's three daughters—Taṇhā, Aratī, and Ragā (Craving, Discontent, and Lusting)—trying to find a point of vulnerability in the newly enlightened Buddha, but their efforts are in vain and they must depart disappointed (4:24, 25).

#### 5. BHIKKHUNISAMYUTTA

The Bhikkhunisamyutta is a compilation of ten short suttas in mixed prose and verse, undivided into vaggas. The protagonists are all bhikkhunis, Buddhist nuns. Though several of its thirty-seven verses have parallels in the Therīgāthā (mentioned in the notes and Concordance 1 (B)), a substantial number are unique to this collection, while often the variations in roughly parallel versions are themselves of intrinsic interest. At least one nun in the Bhikkhunisamyutta, Vajirā, does not appear at all in the Therīgāthā, while the case of another nun, Selā, is problematic. A comparison between the two collections also brings to light some noteworthy differences in the ascription of authorship. Since SN and the Therīgāthā were evidently transmitted by different lines of reciters, it was only too easy for verses to break off from their original narrative setting and merge with a different background story connecting them to a different author.

All the ten suttas are constructed according to the same pattern, a direct confrontation between Māra and an individual nun. This structure probably accounts for the placement of the Bhikkhunisamyutta immediately after the Mārasamyutta. Each sutta of this collection begins with a nun going off by herself to pass the day in solitary meditation. Then Māra approaches her with a challenge—a provocative question or a taunt—intending to make her fall away from concentration. What Māra has failed to realize is that each of these nuns is an arahant who has seen so deeply into the truth of the Dhamma that she is utterly inaccessible to his wiles. Far from being flustered by Māra's challenge, the nun promptly guesses her adversary's identity and meets his challenge with a sharp retort.

In a dialogue that brings together the Lord of Sensuality with

a solitary nun one might expect each of Māra's overtures to be aimed at sexual seduction. This, however, is so only in several suttas. The actual themes of the discourses vary widely and expose us to a broad range of perspectives on the attitudes and insights of the renunciant life. The contrast between the allurements and misery of sensual pleasures is the theme of 5:1, 4, and 5. In all three cases the nuns sharply rebuke Māra with verses that reveal their utter indifference to his solicitations.

Māra's dialogue with Somā (5:2) voices the ancient Indian prejudice that women are endowed with "mere two-fingered wisdom" and thus cannot attain Nibbāna. Somā's rejoinder is a forceful reminder that enlightenment does not depend on gender but on the mind's capacity for concentration and wisdom, qualities accessible to any human being who earnestly seeks to penetrate the truth. In 5:3, Māra approaches Kisāgotamī, the heroine of the well-known parable of the mustard seed, trying to arouse her maternal instincts to beget another son. His challenge thus touches on sensuality only indirectly, his primary appeal being aimed at the feminine desire for children.

The last two suttas are philosophical masterpieces, compressing into a few tight stanzas insights of enormous depth and wide implications. When Māra challenges Selā with a question on the origins of personal existence, she replies with a masterly poem that condenses the whole teaching of dependent origination into three four-line stanzas adorned with an illuminating simile (5:9). He poses a similar problem to Vajirā, who answers with a stunning exposition of the teaching of nonself, illustrating the composite nature of personal identity with the famous simile of the chariot (5:10).

Though set against a mythological background in an ancient world whose customs and norms seem so remote from our own, these poems of the ancient nuns still speak to us today through their sheer simplicity and uncompromising honesty. They need no ornamentation or artifice to convey their message, for they are sufficient in themselves to startle us with the clarity of unadorned truth.

#### 6. BRAHMASAMYUTTA

Brahmā was the supreme deity of early Brahmanism, conceived

as the creator of the universe and venerated by the brahmins with sacrifices and rituals. Occasionally this conception of Brahmā persists in the Buddhist canon, though as a target of criticism and satire rather than as an article of faith. In such contexts the word “brahmā” is used as a proper name, often augmented to Mahābrahmā, “Brahmā the Great.” The Buddha reinterpreted the idea of brahmā and transformed the single, all-powerful deity of the brahmins into a class of exalted gods dwelling in the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) far above the sense-sphere heavens. Their abode is referred to as “the brahmā world,” of which there are many, of varying dimensions and degrees of hegemony. Within their realm the brahmās dwell in companies, and Mahābrahmā (or sometimes a brahmā of a more personal name) is seen as the ruler of that company, complete with ministers and assembly. Like all sentient beings, the brahmās are impermanent, still tied to the round of rebirth, though sometimes they forget this and imagine themselves immortal.

The path to rebirth in the brahmā world is mastery over the jhānas, each of which is ontologically attuned to a particular level of the form realm (see Table 3). Sometimes the Buddha mentions the four “divine abodes” (*brahmavihāra*) as the means to rebirth in the brahmā world. These are the “immeasurable” meditations on lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity (*mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā*).

The Nikāyas offer an ambivalent evaluation of the brahmās, as can be seen from the present saṃyutta. On the one hand, certain brahmās are depicted as valiant protectors of the Buddha’s dispensation and devoted followers of the Master. But precisely because of their longevity and elevated stature in the cosmic hierarchy, the brahmās are prone to delusion and conceit; indeed, they sometimes imagine they are all-powerful creators and rulers of the universe. Perhaps this dual evaluation reflects the Buddha’s ambivalent attitude towards the brahmins: admiration for the ancient spiritual ideals of the brahmin life (as preserved in the expressions *brahmacariya* and *brahmavihāra*) coupled with rejection of the pretensions of the contemporary brahmins to superiority based on birth and lineage.

The most eminent of the brahmās devoted to the Buddha is Brahmā Sahampati, who appears several times in SN. Soon after

the enlightenment he descends from his divine abode and reappears before the Blessed One to beseech him to teach the Dhamma to the world (6:1). He applauds the Buddha’s reverence for the Dhamma (6:2), extols an arahant bhikkhu on alms round (6:3), reproaches the evil Devadatta (6:12), and shows up again at the Buddha’s parinibbāna, where he recites a verse of eulogy (6:15). He will also appear in other saṃyuttas (at 11:17; 22:80; 47:18, 43; and 48:57).

Brahmās of the deluded type are epitomized by Brahmā Baka, who imagined himself eternal and had to be divested of this illusion by the Master (6:4). On another occasion, an unnamed brahmā imagined he was superior to the arahants, and the Buddha and four great disciples visited his realm to make him alter his views (6:5). We also witness a contest between a negligent brahmā, stiff with pride, and two colleagues of his, devotees of the Buddha, who sweep away his illusions (6:6). The penultimate sutta shows a disciple of the past Buddha Sikhi awing a whole assembly of proud brahmās with his display of psychic powers (6:14). This saṃyutta also relates the sad story of the monk Kokālika, a cohort of Devadatta, who tried to defame the chief disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna and had to reap the kammic result as a rebirth in hell (6:9–10). The last sutta in this collection, included here only because of Brahmā Sahampati’s single verse, is a parallel of the death scene in the long Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.

## 7. BRĀHMAṆASAMYUTTA

This saṃyutta, recording the Buddha’s conversations with brahmins, contains two vaggas, each with a different unifying theme. In the first all the brahmins who come to the Buddha, often angry (7:1–4) or disdainful (7:7–9), are so deeply stirred by his words that they ask for ordination into the Saṅgha and “not long afterwards” attain arahantship. These suttas display the Buddha as the incarnation of patience and peace, capable of working, in those who would attack him, the miracle of transformation simply by his unshakable equanimity and impeccable wisdom. In this vaggā we also see how the Buddha assessed the brahmin claim to superior status based on birth. He here interprets the word “brahmin” by way of its original meaning, as a

holy man, and on this basis redefines the true brahmin as the arahant. The three Vedas which the brahmins revered and diligently studied are replaced by the three *vijjās* or true knowledges possessed by the arahant: knowledge of past births, of the laws of kammic retribution, and of the destruction of the taints (7:8). The last sutta adds a touch of humour, still recognizable today, by depicting the contrast between the oppressive cares of the household life and the untrammelled freedom of the life of renunciation (7:10).

In the second vagga the brahmins come to challenge the Buddha in still different ways, and again the Buddha rises to the occasion with his inexhaustible wit and wisdom. In this vagga, however, though the Buddha inspires in his antagonists a newly won faith, the brahmin converts do not become monks but declare themselves lay followers "who have gone for refuge for life."

#### 8. VAṄGISASAMYUTTA

The bhikkhu Vaṅgisa was declared by the Buddha the foremost disciple of those gifted with inspirational speech (*paṭibhānavantānaṃ*, at AN I 24,21). This title accrued to him on account of his skill in composing spontaneous verse. His verses make up the longest chapter in the Theragāthā, whose seventy-one verses (Th 1209–79) closely correspond with those in the present saṃyutta but lack the prose frameworks. Another poem by Vaṅgisa, found at Sn II, 12, is not included in the present compilation but does have a counterpart in the Theragāthā.

The verses of Vaṅgisa are not mere metrical aphorisms (as are so many verses in this collection) but skilfully wrought poetic compositions that can well claim an honoured place in early Indian poetry. They also reveal, with unabashed honesty, the trials and temptations which their author faced in his career as a monk. Having an aesthetic bent of character and a natural appreciation of sensuous beauty, Vaṅgisa must have gone through a difficult struggle in his early days as a monk adjusting to the strict discipline required of a bhikkhu, with its training in sense restraint and vigilant control of the mind. The early suttas in this chapter (8:1–4) speak of his battle against sensual lust, his susceptibility to the charms of the opposite sex, and his firm determination not to succumb but to continue bravely along the

path laid down by his Master. They also tell of his proclivity to pride, no doubt based on his natural talent as a poet, and of his endeavour to subdue this flaw of character. Later in his monastic career, apparently after he gained a greater degree of self-mastery, he often extolled the Buddha in verse, and on one occasion the Blessed One requested him to compose extemporaneous verses (8:8). In other poems he praises the great disciples Sāriputta, Moggallāna, and Koṇḍañña (8:6, 9, 10). The last poem in the saṃyutta, partly autobiographical, concludes with a declaration that the author has become an arahant equipped with the three true knowledges and other spiritual powers (8:12).

#### 9. VANASAMYUTTA

This saṃyutta consists of fourteen suttas most of which are constructed according to a stereotyped pattern. A bhikkhu is living alone in a woodland thicket, where he should be meditating ardently, but human weakness gets the better of him and causes him to swerve from his religious duties. Then a devatā dwelling in the thicket takes compassion on him and chides him in verse, seeking to reawaken his sense of urgency. Apparently these devatās are not celestial beings, like those we meet in the Devatāsamyutta, but dryads or fairies, and they seem to be feminine. On a few occasions the devatā errs in her assessment of the bhikkhu's behaviour. Thus in 9:2 the devatā comes to reproach the bhikkhu for taking a nap, unaware he has already attained arahantship, and in 9:8 for associating too closely with a woman, again unaware the bhikkhu is an arahant (according to the commentary). In 9:6, a devatā from the Tāvatiṃsa heaven tries to persuade the Venerable Anuruddha to aspire for rebirth in her realm, but he declares that he has ended the process of rebirth and will never take another existence. The last sutta in the chapter (9:14) also occurs in the Jātakas, interestingly with the Bodhisatta in the role played here by the bhikkhu.

#### 10. YAKKHASAMYUTTA

The yakkhas are fierce spirits inhabiting remote areas such as forests, hills, and abandoned caves. They are depicted as of hideous mien and wrathful temperament, but when given offer-

ings and shown respect they become benign and may protect people rather than harm them. Many of the shrines that dotted the North Indian countryside were built to honour the yakkhas and secure their favours. Though living in misery they have the potential for awakening and can attain the paths and fruits of the spiritual life.

The suttas in this chapter cover a wide range of topics. What unites them is not so much the content of the verses but their propagational function in showing the Buddha as the invincible sage who, by his skilful means, can tame and transform even the most violent and fearsome ogres, such as Sūciloma (10:3) and Ālavaka (10:12). The saṃyutta also includes two charming tales of female yakkhas, famished spirits haunting the outskirts of Jeta's Grove, who are so deeply moved by the Buddha's sermons and the chanting of the monks that they turn over a new leaf and become pious lay devotees (10:6, 7). In this saṃyutta too we find the story of Anāthapiṇḍika's first meeting with the Buddha, which was abetted by friendly advice from a benevolent yakkha (10:8). In three suttas the yakkhas speak verses in praise of bhikkhunis (10:9–11).

#### 11. SAKKASAMYUTTA

In the early Buddhist pantheon, Sakka is the ruler of the devas in the Tāvātimsa heaven and also a follower of the Buddha. A long conversation between him and the Buddha, culminating in his attainment of stream-entry, is told in the Sakkapañha Sutta (DN No. 20). This saṃyutta does not report the Buddha's own encounters with Sakka, but gives (in the Buddha's words) accounts of Sakka's deeds and conversations. The suttas are thus presented as fables, but fables which always embody a moral message. The saṃyutta also includes the famous Dhajagga Sutta (11:3), in which the Buddha commends to the monks recollection of the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—as an antidote to fear.

In Buddhist legend the Tāvātimsa devas are perpetually being attacked by the asuras, the titans, beings of great physical prowess and violent ambition who seek to conquer them and take control of their domain. The Sakkasamyutta repeatedly pits Sakka in struggle against the leaders of the asuras, Vepacitti and

Verocana. The two sides can be read as symbolizing alternative political philosophies. The asura leaders favour rule by force and retaliation against enemies; they rationalize aggression and extol the ethic of "might makes right." Sakka, in contrast, stands for rule by righteousness, patience towards aggressors, and the compassionate treatment of wrongdoers (11:4, 5, 8). Sakka and the devas honour sages and holy men, the asuras scorn them, and thus the sages help the devas but curse the asuras (11:9, 10).

In this saṃyutta Sakka appears as the ideal lay devotee. He earned his place as ruler of the devas, while he was still a human being, by fulfilling seven vows which embody the standards of the virtuous householder (11:11). His understanding of the Buddha's excellence is inferior to Brahmā Sahampati's (11:17), but in three suttas he eloquently proclaims the reasons for his devotion to the Buddha, the Saṅgha, and even devout householders (11:18–20). In the last three suttas, the Buddha holds up Sakka's patience and forgiveness as a model for the bhikkhus (11:23–25).



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## Introduction

The *Nidānavagga*, The Book of Causation, is named after its first saṃyutta, one of the deep royal saṃyuttas setting forth the radical philosophical vision of early Buddhism. The Vagga contains ten saṃyuttas, of which the first takes up almost half the volume. The other nine deal with less weighty topics, though it is possible the Dhātusaṃyutta, which is also devoted to first principles of Buddhist phenomenology, was intentionally included in the Vagga as a "junior partner" to the Nidānasaṃyutta. While this hypothesis must remain unconfirmable, what is beyond doubt is that with this Vagga we enter upon a very different terrain from that traversed in the Sagāthāvagga, a terrain where precise philosophical exposition takes priority over literary grace, inspirational charm, and moral edification.

Having used the expression "precise philosophical exposition," however, I must at once qualify it in two respects. First, the word "philosophical" applies to the contents of these saṃyuttas only in the sense that they articulate a body of first principles which disclose the deep underlying structures of actuality, not in the sense that they set out to construct a systematic edifice of thought whose primary appeal is to the intellect. Their disclosures always take place within the framework laid out by the Four Noble Truths, which makes it clear that their primary intent is pragmatic, directed towards the cessation of suffering. They are expounded, not to delineate an intellectually satisfying system of ideas, but to make known those aspects of actuality, deep and hidden, that must be penetrated by wisdom to eradicate the ignorance at the bottom of existential suffering. The suttas are guidelines to seeing and understanding, signposts pointing to what one must see for oneself with direct insight. To regard their

themes as topics for intellectual entertainment and argumentation is to miss the point.

Second, when I use the word "exposition," this should not arouse expectations that the suttas are going to provide us with thorough, systematic, logically progressive treatises of the type we find in the history of Western philosophy. Far to the contrary, what we are presented with is a virtual mosaic of reconnaissance photographs laying bare a landscape that is strange but uncannily familiar. The landscape, ultimately, is our own personal experience, seen in depth and with microscopic precision. Each sutta shows up this landscape from a distinctive angle. Like any photo, the picture given by a single sutta is necessarily limited, taken from a single standpoint and with a narrow point of focus, but in its capacity for revelation it can be stark and powerful. To make sense of the multiple shots offered by the suttas, following one another with hardly a hair's breadth of logical order, we must reshuffle them many times, ponder them deeply, and investigate them closely with wisdom. To arrive at the total picture, or at least at a fuller picture than we possess when we approach the texts in a cursory way, we must consider the suttas in a given saṃyutta in their totality, compare them with parallel discourses in other saṃyuttas, and then try to fit them together, like the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, into a coherent whole. This is about as far from systematic exposition as one can get, for the purpose is not to gratify the intellect with a fully articulated system but to awaken insight, and such an aim requires a methodology of its own.

### 12. *Nidānasamyutta*

The *Nidānasamyutta* collects into one chapter of nine vaggas ninety-three short suttas concerned with dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). This chapter might have even been named the *Paṭicca-samuppādasamyutta*, but the compilers of the canon must have considered such a title too unwieldy and settled upon a more concise designation for it. The word *nidāna* means cause or source, and is sometimes used in a chain of synonyms that includes *hetu*, *samudaya*, and *paccaya*, "cause, origin, condition" (see DN II 57,27 foll.). The word gives its name to the longest sutta in the *Nikāyas* on *paṭicca-samuppāda*, the *Mahānidāna Sutta* (DN No. 15).

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Dependent origination is one of the central teachings of early Buddhism, so vital to the teaching as a whole that the Buddha is quoted elsewhere as saying, "One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma, and one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination" (MN I 190,37–191,2). The ultimate purpose of the teaching on dependent origination is to expose the conditions that sustain the round of rebirths, *saṃsāra*, so as to show what must be done to gain release from the round. Existence within *saṃsāra* is suffering and bondage (*dukkha*), and hence the ending of suffering requires deliverance from the round. To win deliverance is a matter of unravelling the causal pattern that underlies our bondage, a process that begins with understanding the causal pattern itself. It is dependent origination that defines this causal pattern.

Dependent origination is usually expounded in a sequence of twelve factors (*dvādasāṅga*) joined into a chain of eleven propositions. In the *Nidānasamyutta* this formula is cited many times. It is expounded in two orders: by way of origination (called *anuloma* or forward sequence), and by way of cessation (called *paṭiloma* or reverse sequence). Sometimes the presentation proceeds from the first factor to the last, sometimes it begins at the end and traces the chain of conditions back to the first. Other suttas pick up the chain somewhere in the middle and work either backwards or forwards. We find the bare formula at 12:1, with formal definitions of the twelve factors in the "analysis of dependent origination" at 12:2. The whole formula in turn exemplifies an abstract structural principle of conditionality, "When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases" (for references, see II, n. 14). This structural principle can be given different applications than those found in the formula of dependent origination, and indeed underlies almost every aspect of the Buddha's teaching, from his ideas about social reformation to his outline of the path to *Nibbāna*.

To hope to find in the *Nidānasamyutta* a clear explanation of the sequence of conditions, as we might expect from a modern textbook on the subject, is to court disappointment. The formula preserved in the texts is stripped to the bone, perhaps serving as a mnemonic device, and it seems likely that the original expositions on the topic were fleshed out with elaborations that were

not recorded in the suttas but were transmitted orally within the lineage of teachers. Because the texts lack a clearcut explanation of the formula, modern interpreters of early Buddhism have sometimes devised capricious theories about its original meaning, theories which assume that the Buddhist tradition itself has muddled up the interpretation of this most basic Buddhist doctrine. To avoid the arbitrariness and wilfulness of personal opinion, it seems more prudent to rely on the method of explanation found in the Buddhist exegetical tradition, which despite minor differences in details is largely the same across the spectrum of early Buddhist schools. Here I will give only a concise summary of the interpretation offered by the Pāli tradition.

Because of (i) ignorance (*avijjā*), lack of direct knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, a person engages in volitional actions, wholesome and unwholesome activities of body, speech, and mind; these are (ii) the volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*), in other words, kamma. The volitional formations sustain consciousness from one life to the next and determine where it re-arises; in this way volitional formations condition (iii) consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Along with consciousness, beginning with the moment of conception, comes (iv) "name-and-form" (*nāmarūpa*), the sentient organism with its physical form (*rūpa*) and its sensitive and cognitive capacities (*nāma*). The sentient organism is equipped with (v) six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), the five physical sense faculties and the mind as organ of cognition. The sense bases allow (vi) contact (*phassa*) to occur between consciousness and its objects, and contact conditions (vii) feeling (*vedanā*). Called into play by feeling, (viii) craving (*taṇhā*) arises, and when craving intensifies it gives rise to (ix) clinging (*upādāna*), tight attachment to the objects of desire through sensuality and wrong views. Impelled by one's attachments, one again engages in volitional actions pregnant with (x) a new existence (*bhava*). At death this potential for new existence is actualized in a new life beginning with (xi) birth (*jāti*) and ending in (xii) aging-and-death (*jarāmaraṇa*).

From this we can see that the traditional interpretation regards the twelve factors as spread out over a span of three lives, with ignorance and volitional formations pertaining to the past, birth and aging-and-death to the future, and the intermediate factors to the present. The segment from consciousness through feeling is the resultant phase of the present, the phase resulting from past

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TABLE 4

Dependent Origination  
according to the Pāli exegetical tradition

3 Periods	12 Factors	20 Modes and 4 Groups	
past	1. ignorance	5 past causes: 1, 2, 8, 9, 10	
	2. volitional formations		
present	3. consciousness	5 present effects: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
	4. name-and-form		
	5. six sense bases		
	6. contact		
	7. feeling		
	8. craving		5 present causes: 8, 9, 10, 1, 2
	9. clinging		
10. existence			
future	11. birth	5 future effects: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
	12. aging-and-death		

*The two roots*

1. Ignorance (from past to present)
2. Craving (from present to future)

*The three connections*

1. Past causes with present effects (between 2 & 3)
2. Present effects with present causes (between 7 & 8)
3. Present causes with future effects (between 10 & 11)

*The three rounds*

1. The round of defilements: 1, 8, 9
2. The round of kamma: 2, 10 (part)
3. The round of results: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 (part), 11, 12

ignorance and kamma; the segment from craving through active existence is the kammically creative phase of the present, leading to renewed existence in the future. Existence is distinguished into two phases: one, called kamma-existence (*kammabhava*), belongs

to the causal phase of the present; the other, called rebirth-existence (*upapattibhava*), belongs to the resultant phase of the future. The twelve factors are also distributed into three "rounds": the round of defilements (*kilesavaṭṭa*) includes ignorance, craving, and clinging; the round of action (*kammavaṭṭa*) includes volitional formations and kamma-existence; all the other factors belong to the round of results (*vipākavaṭṭa*). Defilements give rise to defiled actions, actions bring forth results, and results serve as the soil for more defilements. In this way the round of rebirths revolves without discernible beginning.

This method of dividing up the factors should not be misconstrued to mean that the past, present, and future factors are mutually exclusive. The distribution into three lives is only an expository device which, for the sake of concision, has to resort to abstraction and oversimplification. As many of the suttas in the *Nidānasamyutta* show, in their dynamic operation groups of factors separated in the formula inevitably become intertwined. Thus whenever there is ignorance, then craving and clinging invariably come along; and whenever there is craving and clinging, then ignorance stands behind them. We might regard the twelve factors as composed of two parallel series defining a single process, the conditioned regeneration of *samsāra* from within itself, but doing so from complementary angles. The first series treats ignorance as the root, and shows how ignorance leads to kammic activity (i.e., the volitional formations) and thence to a new existence consisting in the interplay of consciousness and name-and-form. The second series makes craving the root, and shows how craving leads to clinging and kammic activity (i.e., active existence) and thence to the production of a new existence that begins with birth and ends in aging and death. To join the two segments, the factors within name-and-form from which craving arises must be drawn out, and thus we get the three links—the six sense bases, contact, and feeling.

The three-life interpretation of dependent origination has sometimes been branded a commentarial invention on the ground that the suttas themselves do not divide the terms up into different lifetimes. However, while it is true that we do not find in the suttas an explicit distribution of the factors into three lives, close examination of the variants on the standard formula lend strong support to the three-life interpretation. One example is

12:19, where ignorance and craving are first assigned jointly to a past life, giving rise to a new life lived in a conscious body with its six sense bases; and then, in the case of the fool (but not the wise man), ignorance and craving again function as joint causes in the present life to bring about renewed birth and suffering in the future life. A close examination of other variants in this *samyutta* would also establish that the series of terms extends over several lives.

The opening *vagga* calls immediate attention to the importance of dependent origination with a string of suttas showing how the seven Buddhas of the past, ending in "our" Buddha Gotama, attained perfect enlightenment by awakening to dependent origination, the eye-opening discovery that ended their long search for the light of wisdom (12:4–10). Later the Buddha gives a more detailed account of his own awakening to dependent origination, where he illustrates his discovery of the Noble Eightfold Path with the beautiful parable of the ancient city (12:65). According to 12:20, the causal connections between the factors operate whether or not Buddhas arise: they are the persistent, stable, invariable laws of actuality. The task of a *Tathāgata* is to discover them, fathom them thoroughly, and then proclaim them to the world. The invariability of the causal law, and the regularity in the arising of Perfectly Enlightened Buddhas, are thus joined into a single order ultimately identical with the *Dhamma* itself.

Several suttas show that dependent origination served the Buddha as a "teaching by the middle" (*majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti*), enabling him to steer clear of the two extreme views about the human condition that have polarized reflective thought through the centuries. One is the metaphysical thesis of eternalism (*sassatavāda*), which posits a permanent self as the underlying ground of personal existence, a self which, in classical Indian thought, transmigrates from one life to the next while retaining its individual identity. The other extreme is annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*), which holds that the individual can be reduced to the phenomenal personality and that at death, with the dissolution of the body, the person is entirely cut off and annihilated. Both extremes pose insuperable problems, for the one encourages an obstinate clinging to the conditions out of which suffering arises while the other threatens to undermine ethics and to make suffering inexplicable except as the product of

chance. Dependent origination offers a new perspective which rises above the extremes. The teaching shows individual existence to be constituted by a current of conditioned phenomena which is devoid of a metaphysical self, yet which continues from life to life as long as the causes that sustain it remain efficacious. Thereby dependent origination offers a meaningful explanation of the problem of suffering which avoids, on the one hand, the philosophical conundrums posed by the hypothesis of a permanent self, and on the other the dangers of ethical anarchy posed by annihilationism. As long as ignorance and craving remain, the round of rebirths continues on, kamma yields its pleasant and painful fruit, and the great mass of suffering accumulates. With their removal, and only with their removal, can a complete end be made to the whole round of saṃsāric suffering.

The most elegant exposition of dependent origination as the "middle teaching" is without doubt the famous Kaccānagotta Sutta (12:15), in which the Buddha holds up this principle as an alternative to the extremes of existence and nonexistence. Dependent origination provides the key for understanding the arising of suffering as well as pleasure and pain (12:17, 18; see too 12:24–26), and again for cutting through a variety of philosophical antinomies adopted by the thinkers of his era (12:46–48).

Though the twelve-factored formula of dependent origination is the most common expression of the doctrine, the *Nidāna-saṃyutta* introduces a number of little-known variants that help to illuminate the standard version. One is a ten-factored variant in which ignorance and volitional formations are omitted and consciousness and name-and-form become mutually dependent (12:65). This is illustrated by the simile of two sheaves of reeds which support each other and collapse when either is withdrawn (12:67). An interesting sequence of three texts (12:38–40) speaks about the conditions for "the maintenance of consciousness" (*viññānassa thitiyā*), that is, how consciousness passes on to a new existence. The causes are said to be the underlying tendencies, i.e., ignorance and craving, and "what one intends and plans," i.e., one's volitional activities. Once consciousness becomes established, the production of a new existence begins, thus showing that we can proceed directly from consciousness (the usual third factor) to existence (the usual tenth factor).

These variants make it plain that the sequence of factors should

not be regarded as a linear causal process in which each preceding factor gives rise to its successor through the simple exercise of efficient causality. The relationship among the factors is always one of complex conditionality rather than linear causation. The conditioning function can include such diverse relations as mutuality (when two factors mutually support each other), necessary antecedence (when one factor must be present for another to arise), distal efficiency (as when a remotely past volitional formation generates consciousness in a new life), etc. Moreover, by contemplating a number of variant texts side by side, we can see that at selected points in the series the links loop back in ways that reinforce the complexity of the process. Thus, while consciousness precedes the six sense bases in the usual formula, at 12:43 and 12:44 the six sense bases are shown to be conditions for consciousness. While consciousness normally precedes craving, 12:64 makes craving (with lust and delight) the condition for the continuation of consciousness and volitional formations the condition for existence.

The positive and negative sequences of dependent origination are expanded definitions of the second and third of the Four Noble Truths, as shown by the variant at 12:43. From the six internal and external sense bases, as we just saw, consciousness arises, and this is followed by contact, feeling, and craving, which is then declared to be the origin of suffering; when craving is abandoned, suffering stops. The next sutta, 12:44, employs a similar pattern to explain the origin and passing away of the world. This reveals dependent origination to be, not a remote and inaccessible metaphysical law, but a process perpetually underpinning our own everyday sensory experience, activated by our responses to the feelings arisen at the six sense bases. As the suttas 12:52–60 show, when attention to the objects of perception is driven by a thirst for gratification, craving is intensified, and this builds up another round of suffering. But when one learns to discern the danger in the objects of clinging, craving ceases, bringing the subsequent factors to a standstill.

In several suttas the formula for dependent origination is integrated with another doctrinal paradigm, that of the four nutrients (*āhāra*). These are the four strong supports for sentient existence, namely, edible food (for the body), contact (for feeling), mental volition (for the production of renewed existence), and

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consciousness (for name-and-form). The ideas of nutrition and conditionality closely correspond, both implying the contingency and insubstantiality of all phenomena of existence. Hence it is natural for the formula of the four nutriments to be grafted on to an exposition of dependent origination. In 12:12, in relation to the nutriments, the Buddha repeatedly rejects questions that imply the presence of a substantial subject or agent behind the process of experience. The conditioning factors themselves constitute the ongoing flow of experience, with no need to posit a permanent self as the "someone" at the receiving end of feeling and perception, or at the instigating end of action. 12:63, entirely devoted to the four nutriments with no explicit mention made of dependent origination, introduces four thought-provoking similes to expose the dangers in the four nutriments and to inspire a sense of revulsion towards the whole process of nutrition. Because at least three of the four nutriments are internal to the sentient organism itself, the teaching of the four nutriments implies, at a very deep level, that sentient existence not only requires nutriment from outside but is itself a self-sustaining process of nutrition.

One variant in this saṃyutta stands in a class of its own. This is the short but pithy Upanisā Sutta (12:23), which shows that the same principle of conditionality that underlies the movement of saṃsāra also undergirds the path to liberation. Each stage of the path arises with its predecessor as a condition or proximate cause, all the way from the initial act of faith to the final knowledge of deliverance. This presentation of the doctrine has sometimes been called "transcendental dependent origination."

Since the round is propelled by craving, and craving is nurtured by ignorance, to break the forward movement of the series, ignorance must be replaced by knowledge. With the removal of ignorance all the factors that flow from it—craving, clinging, and kammic activity—come to a halt, bringing to an end the round of rebirths with all its attendant suffering. From one angle, as is often shown in the *Nidānasam̐yutta*, ignorance means not knowing the dependently arisen phenomena, their origin, their cessation, and the way to their cessation (12:14, 49, etc.). Thus the ignorance at the head of the causal series, the ignorance which sustains the forward movement of dependent origination, is nothing other than ignorance about dependent origination itself. From this it follows that the knowledge needed to bring dependent origination to a

stop is just knowledge of how dependent origination works.

Several important suttas in the *Nidānasam̐yutta* make it clear that dependent origination is not merely an explanatory principle to be accepted on trust but an essential component of the knowledge needed to reach the end of suffering. Often the Buddha states that the connections among the factors are to be directly known, both by way of origination and by way of cessation. They are thus not merely aspects of theory but the content of intuitive insight. To gain this knowledge is to acquire the right view of a noble disciple who has personally seen the truth of the Dhamma and entered the path of a trainee (*sekha*), one bound to reach the Deathless in seven more lives at most, without ever falling away. Direct knowledge of dependent origination is not the unique mark of the arahant—a widespread misconception—but an achievement already reached by the stream-enterer on making "the breakthrough to the Dhamma" (*dhammābhisaṃyaya*). The noble disciple's knowledge of dependent origination has two aspects: one is a direct perception of the relationships between each pair of factors in the present; the other, an inferential knowledge that this fixed order of phenomena holds invariably in the past and future, so that anyone who comprehends dependent origination must comprehend it in exactly the same way that the noble disciple has comprehended it (see 12:33–34). Once the stream-enterer gains this knowledge, attainment of the final goal is irrevocably assured, as is clear from 12:41 and from the paragraph concluding 12:27, 28, and 49–50.

Towards the end of this chapter, in 12:70 we read the story of the wanderer Susima, who entered the order as a "thief of Dhamma" intending to learn the Buddha's teaching to gain advantages for his own company of followers. On being subjected to a catechism by the Buddha on the five aggregates and dependent origination, he underwent a genuine change of heart and confessed his evil intentions. This sutta introduces a class of arahants described as "liberated by wisdom" (*paññāvimutta*), who have won the final goal by understanding the Dhamma without gaining the supernormal powers or the formless meditations. The sutta also makes it clear that knowledge of the true nature of phenomena, i.e., of the five aggregates and dependent origination, precedes knowledge of Nibbāna.

The *Nidānasam̐yutta* closes with two vaggas cast as repetition

series. Vagga VIII applies the four-truth template of the “ascetics and brahmins” paradigm to each factor of the standard formula (excluding ignorance, implicitly included as the condition for volitional formations). Vagga IX is an “incorporated repetition series,” because each sutta incorporates all eleven factors along with their conditions into an abbreviated text. It is thus implied that each sutta could be “unpacked” by taking each factor with its condition as the subject of a separate sutta, so that the total number of suttas in the vagga would increase from twelve to 132.

### 13. *Abhisamayasaṃyutta*

This saṃyutta contains only eleven suttas without division into vaggas. Strangely, the Sinhala edition of SN and its commentary do not count it as a separate saṃyutta but treat it as a vagga within the Nidānasaṃyutta. This seems difficult to justify, as the suttas make no mention of dependent origination nor do they allude to the chain of causation. Perhaps the Sinhalese redactors included it in the Nidānasaṃyutta because the disciple’s breakthrough to stream-entry comes about through the realization of dependent origination. As an explanation, however, this seems inadequate when the suttas do not explicitly mention dependent origination.

The purpose of this saṃyutta is to extol the breakthrough to the Dhamma (*dharmābhisamaya*), also called the obtaining of the vision of the Dhamma (*dharmacakkhupaṭilābha*), the event that transforms a person into a noble disciple at the minimum level of stream-enterer. The stream-enterer is one who has obtained the transcendental path leading to Nibbāna and is bound to put an end to saṃsāric wandering after seven more lives at most, all lived in either the heavens or the human world. The first ten suttas are all moulded on the same pattern: the Buddha first contrasts two obviously incommensurate quantities and then compares this disparity with that between the amount of suffering the noble disciple has eliminated and the amount that still remains in the maximum span of seven lives. The last sutta differs in the terms of comparison: here the contrast is between the achievements of the non-Buddhist ascetics and the achievement of the noble disciple who has made the breakthrough, the latter being immensely greater than the former.

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### 14. *Dhātusaṃyutta*

This saṃyutta consists of thirty-nine suttas, arranged into four vaggas, all concerned in some way with elements. The word “elements” (*dhātū*) is applied to several quite disparate groups of phenomena, and thus the suttas in this chapter fall into separate clusters with nothing in common but their concern with entities called elements. The four vaggas could not be neatly divided into decads each devoted to a different group of elements, for the number of suttas to be included in the middle two vaggas did not allow for this.

The first vagga deals with eighteen elements that make up one of the major models of phenomenological analysis used in the Nikāyas, often mentioned alongside the five aggregates and the six internal and external sense bases. The eighteen elements fall into six triads: sense faculties, objects, and corresponding types of consciousness. The denotations of the first five triads seem obvious enough, but unclarity surrounds the last, the triad of mind (*mano*), mental phenomena (*dhammā*), and mind-consciousness (*manoviññāna*). Strangely, the Nikāyas themselves do not explain the precise referents of these three elements or the nature of their relationship. This is first done in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. In the developed systematic version of the Abhidhamma, the mind element is a simpler type of cognitive act than the mind-consciousness element, to which is assigned the more advanced cognitive operations. The mental phenomena element denotes not only objects of mind-consciousness, but also the mental factors that accompany consciousness, included in the aggregates of feeling, perception, and volitional formations (for details see n. 224).

This first vagga is divided into two “pentads” (*pañcaka*): an “internal pentad,” which takes the sense faculties as the point of departure; and an “external pentad,” which begins with the objects. The first sutta really belongs to neither set, as it merely enumerates the eighteen elements. The internal series, which starts with 14:2, shows how successive mental functions—first contact and then feeling—arise in dependence on their predecessors in a fixed order which cannot be inverted. In the external pentad the same mode of treatment is applied to the mental functions that relate more specifically to the objects; the chain here is

more complex and the internal relationships in need of explanation. The explanations offered by the commentary are intended to square apparent irregularities with patterns of relationship accepted as authoritative by the age of the commentators. It is an open question whether these explanations reflect the understanding of the elements held in the earliest phase of Buddhist thought.

The second vagga opens with three suttas on miscellaneous types of elements, not highly systematized. Then there follows a long series of suttas, 14:14–29, in which the word “element” is used in the sense of personal disposition. With respect to numerous contrasting qualities, good and bad, the point is made that people come together because of personal affinities rooted in these qualities. One memorable sutta in this group shows each of the Buddha’s leading disciples walking in the company of fellow monks who share his field of interest; even Devadatta, the miscreant in the Saṅgha, has his own entourage made up of those with evil wishes (14:15).

The fourth vagga focuses upon the four primary elements of physical form: earth, water, heat, and air. The suttas in this vagga are all moulded upon templates, including the gratification triad and the ascetics and brahmins series discussed in the General Introduction (see above, p. 38).

#### 15. *Anamataggasaṃyutta*

The *Anamataggasaṃyutta*, “On Without Discoverable Beginning,” is so called because its theme is the unbounded temporal extent of saṃsāra. The precise meaning of the phrase *anamatagga* is uncertain, the term itself differing in the texts of the early Buddhist schools, but the idea it is intended to suggest is conveyed well enough by the second sentence of the opening homily: that a first point of the round of rebirths cannot be discerned. The underlying purpose of this *saṃyutta* is to situate the Buddha’s teaching of liberation against its cosmic background by underscoring the immeasurable mass of suffering we have experienced while wandering from life to life in unbounded time, “hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.”

In sutta after sutta the Buddha illustrates the vastness of saṃsāric suffering with awe-inspiring similes, always drawing the inevitable conclusion that we have experienced the suffering of

repeated birth and death long enough and it is time to strive for ultimate freedom. Four suttas illustrate, by means of memorable similes, the duration of a cosmic aeon (*kappa*), of which countless numbers have elapsed (15:5–8). Sutta 15:10 reinforces the point with its image of the heap of bones one person leaves behind in the course of a single aeon. Particularly stirring is the discourse to the thirty bhikkhus from Pāvā, on the frightful dangers of saṃsāra, a sutta powerful enough to bring all of them to the realization of arahantship right on the spot (15:13). The final sutta in the chapter gives us a retrospective overview of the epochs during which three past Buddhas lived, with some information about conditions of human life during their dispensations.

#### 16. *Kassapasāṃyutta*

Mahākassapa, Kassapa the Great, was named by the Buddha the most eminent disciple in the observance of the ascetic practices (AN I 23,20). Though he did not accompany the Master as regularly as many of the other close disciples did, the Buddha had the highest regard for Kassapa and often spoke in his praise. According to the *Cullavagga* (Vin II 284–85), after the Buddha’s parinibbāna Mahākassapa became the foster father of the newly orphaned Saṅgha and took the initiative in convening a council of elders to rehearse the Dhamma and Discipline. This was a necessary measure to preserve the Buddha’s dispensation for posterity.

This *saṃyutta* brings together thirteen suttas featuring the great disciple. Though they offer us glimpses into Mahākassapa’s role in the Saṅgha and a sharply sketched portrait of his personality, their underlying purpose is not so much to preserve biographical information as it is to hold up Mahākassapa as a role model for the monks to emulate. In the first sutta the Buddha extols him for his simplicity and frugality and enjoins the monks to imitate him in this respect (16:1). He dwells detached and equanimous, yet is also imbued with compassion, sympathy, and tender concern for householders (16:3, 4). He continues to observe the ascetic practices even in old age, for his own happiness and to set an example for future generations (16:5). The Buddha often asked Kassapa to exhort the bhikkhus, but on three occasions he refuses because the bhikkhus are no longer open to instruction (16:6–8). This introduces a theme that comes to a



crescendo in 16:13: the Buddha's dispensation is already starting to decline, and the cause is not external but internal, namely, corruption within the Saṅgha. In 16:9 the Buddha applauds Kassapa for his mastery over the meditative attainments and the direct knowledges, and in 16:10–11 we are given closeup shots of Kassapa's sometimes stressful relationship with Ānanda. Though his attitude towards the gentle Ānanda seems too stern, we must remember that it was through Kassapa's prodding that Ānanda put forth the effort to win arahantship before the First Buddhist Council. In 16:11 Kassapa relates the story of his first meeting with the Buddha, which culminated in an exchange of robes with the Master. This was an honour not bestowed on any other bhikkhu, and presaged Mahākassapa's future role as a leader of the Saṅgha.

#### 17. *Lābhasakkārasaṃyutta*

The life of a bhikkhu requires the renunciation of sensual pleasures and detachment from the normal round of satisfactions provided by family, livelihood, and an active role in civil society. Precisely because he has dedicated himself to a life of austerity and spiritual self-cultivation, the bhikkhu is liable to be regarded prematurely as a holy man and to be showered with gifts, honour, and praise, especially by pious but ingenuous lay devotees in quest of merit. For an unwary bhikkhu the gains and honour that may unexpectedly pour down on him can cast a spell more subtle and seductive even than the lure of the senses. The bhikkhu interprets the gain and honour as an index of his spiritual worth; the praises sung over his name can inflate his ego to dizzying heights. Thus from gain and honour there may arise conceit, self-exaltation, and contempt for others—all stumbling blocks along the path to the "unsurpassed security from bondage."

To protect the bhikkhus from losing sight of their goal, the Buddha often warned them about the dangers in gain, honour, and praise. The present saṃyutta collects forty-three suttas on this theme. The tone of the discourses is unusually grave: one attached to gain and honour is like a fish caught on a baited hook, like a turtle hit by a harpoon, like a goat caught in a thorny briar patch (17:2–4). Even a man who earlier would not tell a deliberate lie to save his life might later lie to win gain and hon-

our (17:19), and some would even sacrifice their mother for such rewards (17:37). But humour is not lacking: one text compares the monk revelling in his gain and honour to a dung beetle revelling in a heap of dung (17:5). The last vagga exhibits Devadatta as a notorious example of one who fell away from the spiritual life owing to hunger for gain, honour, and praise.

#### 18. *Rāhulasāmyutta*

Rāhula was the Buddha's son, born shortly before he left the household life to embark on his quest for enlightenment. When the Buddha returned to his native city of Kapilavatthu in the first year after the enlightenment, he had Rāhula ordained as a novice, and thereafter often gave him instruction. Three longer suttas to Rāhula are found in the Majjhima Nikāya (MN Nos. 61, 62, and 147, the latter identical with SN 35:121). The Rāhulasāmyutta collects twenty-two short texts arranged in two vaggas. The first ten explain the three characteristics in relation to ten groups of phenomena: the six internal sense bases; the six external sense bases; the six classes each of consciousness, contact, feeling, perception, volition, and craving; the six elements; and the five aggregates. They are addressed to Rāhula in response to a request for instruction. The first ten suttas of the second vagga show the Buddha speaking the same ten suttas to Rāhula, but this time on his own initiative. Two additional suttas give instructions on how to eradicate the sense of "I" and "mine" and the tendency to conceit.

#### 19. *Lakkhaṇasaṃyutta*

Although this saṃyutta is named after the elder Lakkhaṇa, his role is to serve as a foil for Mahāmoggallāna, the disciple who excelled in the exercise of psychic powers. Each sutta is constructed according to the same format, in which Moggallāna describes the sufferings of a *peta* or tormented spirit, whom he has seen with supernormal vision, and the Buddha confirms the truth of his vision, giving an explanation of the kammic cause that underlies such misery. Here, as in the printed editions of the Pāli text, the first sutta alone is given in full and thereafter only the variations are recorded. The last five suttas deliver a stern

message to miscreant monks and nuns, perhaps reflecting modes of misbehaviour that were becoming increasingly manifest in the Saṅgha.

#### 20. *Opammasaṃyutta*

This saṃyutta contains twelve suttas touching on miscellaneous topics mostly related to the training of the bhikkhus. Though the topics are diverse, each sutta incorporates an extended simile and it is on this basis that they are brought together into one saṃyutta. The themes that emerge include the rarity of human birth, the blessings of developing lovingkindness, the impermanence of life, and the need for constant diligence. In this collection we also find the Buddha's prophecy of how the Dhamma will decline when the bhikkhus neglect the deep suttas dealing with emptiness in favour of works composed by poets "with beautiful words and phrases."

#### 21. *Bhikkhusaṃyutta*

This saṃyutta collects twelve miscellaneous suttas spoken by or about individual bhikkhus. It is noteworthy that, apart from the first two texts, all the others contain verses, and this arouses suspicion that the saṃyutta originally belonged to the Sagāthāvagga. Indeed, in the Chinese translation of the Saṃyuktāgama, the Bhikkhusaṃyutta is found in the Sagāthāvagga, coming just before the Bhikkhunisaṃyutta. Perhaps at some point in the transmission of the Pāli version the redactors added two verseless suttas on Moggallāna and Sāriputta, and then, in consequence, had to transpose the whole saṃyutta from Part I to Part II. In the midst of the suttas on famous elders there is one addressed to an otherwise unknown bhikkhu named Elder (a fictitious name?) offering pithy instruction on the real meaning of solitude.

[1] PART II: The Book of Causation (*Nidānavagga*)

*Homage to the Blessed One,  
the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One*

### Chapter I

## 12 *Nidānasam̐yutta*

# Connected Discourses on Causation

### I. THE BUDDHAS

#### 1 (1) *Dependent Origination*

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattḥi in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus!"

"Venerable sir!" those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

"Bhikkhus, I will teach you dependent origination. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak." – "Yes, venerable sir," those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

"And what, bhikkhus, is dependent origination? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be];<sup>1</sup> with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name-and-form; with name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called dependent origination.

- 17 Thoroughness in relation to Attainment 1037  
 18 Persistence in relation to Attainment 1037  
 19 Suitability in relation to Attainment 1037  
 20 Emergence in relation to Maintenance 1037  
 21–27 Pliancy in relation to Maintenance, Etc. 1038  
 28 Pliancy in relation to Emergence 1038  
 29–34 The Object in relation to Emergence, Etc. 1038  
 35 The Object in relation to Pliancy 1038  
 36–40 The Range in relation to Pliancy, Etc. 1039  
 41 The Range in relation to the Object 1039  
 42–45 Resolution in relation to the Object, Etc. 1039  
 46 Resolution in relation to the Range 1039  
 47–49 Thoroughness in relation to the Range, Etc. 1040  
 50 Thoroughness in relation to Resolution 1040  
 51–52 Thoroughness in relation to the Range, Etc. 1040  
 53 Persistence in relation to Thoroughness 1040  
 54 Suitability in relation to Thoroughness 1041  
 55 Suitability in relation to Persistence 1041

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## Introduction

The *Khandhavagga*, The Book of the Aggregates, continues along the trail of philosophical exposition opened up by The Book of Causation, but this time breaking into another major area of early Buddhist discourse, the five aggregates. Like its predecessor, the *Khandhavagga* is named after its opening *saṃyutta*, which dominates the entire collection. Though the *Vagga* contains thirteen *saṃyuttas*, none of the minor ones even approaches the length of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, which in the PTS edition takes up 188 of the 278 pages in this volume. But even more, within this *Vagga* three minor *saṃyuttas*—SN 23; 24, and 33—focus on the aggregates as their point of interest. These chapters seem to be offshoots from the original *Khandhasaṃyutta* which at some point were broken off and made into autonomous *saṃyuttas*. Thus the theme of the five aggregates leaves its stamp throughout this whole collection.

### 22. *Khandhasaṃyutta*

The *Khandhasaṃyutta* contains 159 suttas arranged into three divisions called *paññāsakas*, “sets of fifty.” Each *paññāsaka* is made up of five vaggas consisting of approximately ten suttas each, though several vaggas have slightly more than ten. The length and character of the suttas vary widely, ranging from texts several pages long with a unique flavour of their own to extremely terse suttas that merely instantiate a common template.

The topic of this *saṃyutta* is the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), the primary scheme of categories the Buddha draws upon to analyse sentient existence. Whereas the teaching on dependent origination is intended to disclose the dynamic pattern running

through everyday experience that propels the round of birth and death forward from life to life, the teaching on the five aggregates concentrates on experience in its lived immediacy in the continuum from birth to death.

Examination of the five aggregates plays a critical role in the Buddha's teaching for at least four reasons. First, because the five aggregates are the ultimate referent of the first noble truth, the noble truth of suffering (see 56:13), and since all four truths revolve around suffering, understanding the aggregates is essential for understanding the Four Noble Truths as a whole. Second, because the five aggregates are the objective domain of clinging and as such contribute to the causal origination of future suffering. Third, because the removal of clinging is necessary for the attainment of release, and clinging must be removed from the objects around which its tentacles are wrapped, namely, the five aggregates. And fourth, because the removal of clinging is achieved by wisdom, and the kind of wisdom needed is precisely clear insight into the real nature of the aggregates.

The five aggregates are at once the constituents of sentient existence and the operative factors of lived experience, for within the thought world of the Nikāyas existence is of concern only to the extent that it is implicated in experience. Thus the five aggregates simultaneously serve the Buddha as a scheme of categories for analysing human identity and for explicating the structure of experience. However, the analysis into the aggregates undertaken in the Nikāyas is not pursued with the aim of reaching an objective, scientific understanding of the human being along the lines pursued by physiology and psychology; thus comparisons of the Buddhist analysis with those advanced by modern scientific disciplines can easily lead to spurious conclusions. For the Buddha, investigation into the nature of personal existence always remains subordinate to the liberative thrust of the Dhamma, and for this reason only those aspects of human existence that contribute to the realization of this purpose receive the spotlight of his attention.

The word *khandha* (Skt *skandha*) means, among other things, a heap or mass (*rāsi*). The five aggregates are so called because they each unite under one label a multiplicity of phenomena that share the same defining characteristic. Thus whatever form there is, "past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle,

inferior or superior, far or near," is incorporated into the form aggregate, and so for each of the other aggregates (22:48). Two suttas in the *Khandhasamyutta* (22:56, 57) spell out the constituents of each aggregate, doing so in much simpler terms than the later, more elaborate analyses found in the *Visuddhimagga* and the commentaries. The breakdown of the aggregates according to the suttas is shown in Table 5. Another sutta (22:79) explains why each aggregate is called by its assigned name, and it is revealing that these explanations are phrased in terms of functions rather than fixed essences. This treatment of the aggregates as dynamic functions rather than substantial entities already pulls the ground away from the urge to grasp upon them as containing a permanent essence that can be considered the ultimate ground of being.

TABLE 5

The Five Aggregates according to the Suttas  
(based on SN 22:56 and 57)

Aggregate	Contents	Condition
form	4 great elements and form derived from them	nutriment
feeling	6 classes of feeling: feeling born of contact through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind	contact
perception	6 classes of perception: perception of forms, sounds, odours, tastes, tactiles, and mental phenomena	contact
volitional formations	6 classes of volition: volition regarding forms, sounds, odours, tastes, tactiles, and mental phenomena	contact
consciousness	6 classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness	name-and-form

The Khandhasaṃyutta stresses in various ways that the five aggregates are *dukkha*, suffering, a point clearly articulated by the Buddha already in his first sermon when he states, "In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering" (56:11). The aggregates are suffering because they tend to affliction and cannot be made to conform with our desires (22:59); because attachment to them leads to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair (22:1); because their change induces fear, distress, and anxiety (22:7). Even more pointedly, the five aggregates are already suffering simply because they are impermanent (22:15) and thus can never fulfil our hopes for perfect happiness and security. While they give pleasure and joy, which is the gratification (*assāda*) in them, eventually they must change and pass away, and this instability is the danger (*ādinava*) perpetually concealed within them (22:26). Though we habitually assume that we are in control of the aggregates, in truth they are perpetually devouring us, making us their hapless victims (22:79). To identify with the aggregates and seek fulfilment in them is to be like a man who employs as his servant a vicious murderer out to take his life (22:85).

The five aggregates are the objective domain of the defilements that bind living beings to the round of existence, particularly the taints (*āsava*) and clinging (*upādāna*). Whatever in the world one might cling to, it is only form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness that one clings to (22:79). For this reason the aggregates that make up our mundane experience are commonly called the five aggregates subject to clinging (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Clinging, it will be recalled, is one of the links in the chain of dependent origination, the link that leads into the production of a new existence in the future. In 22:5, the five aggregates are spliced into the second half of the formula for dependent origination, thereby revealing how clinging to the five aggregates in this existence brings forth a new birth and thus the reappearance of the five aggregates in the next existence. Sutta 22:54 states that because of attachment to the five aggregates, consciousness grows and thrives from life to life; but with the destruction of lust, consciousness becomes unsupported and is then peaceful and liberated. This sutta assigns to consciousness a special place among the five aggregates, since consciousness stands supported by the other aggregates and passes away and

undergoes rebirth in dependence on them. This dictum accords with the suttas on dependent origination (such as 12:12, 38, and 64) that treat consciousness as the channel or vehicle of the rebirth process.

Clinging to the five aggregates occurs in two principal modes, which we might call appropriation and identification. In clinging to the aggregates, one either grasps them with desire and lust (*chandārāga*) and assumes possession of them, or one identifies with them, taking them as the basis for conceit or for views about one's real self. In a phrase often met with in the Khandhasaṃyutta, we are prone to think of the aggregates, "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" (*etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, eso me attā*). Here, the notion "This is mine" represents the act of appropriation, a function of craving (*taṇhā*). The notions "This I am" and "This is my self" represent two types of identification, the former expressive of conceit (*māna*), the latter of views (*diṭṭhi*).

To break our appropriation of the aggregates, the Buddha often enjoins us to abandon desire and lust for them (22:137-45). Sometimes he tells us to abandon the aggregates themselves, for they are as completely alien to us as the twigs and foliage in Jeta's Grove (22:33-34). But to give up clinging is difficult because clinging is reinforced by views, which rationalize our identification with the aggregates and thus equip clinging with a protective shield.

The type of view that lies at the bottom of all affirmation of selfhood is called identity view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). All views of self are formulated with reference to the five aggregates either collectively or individually (22:47). The suttas often mention twenty types of identity view, obtained by considering one's self to stand in any of four relations to each of the five aggregates: either as identical with it, as possessing it, as containing it, or as contained within it (22:1, 7, 47, 81, 82, etc.). The Buddha describes identity view as the leash that keeps the worldling bound to the round of rebirths, revolving in circles like a dog going around a post (22:99, 117). He also makes identity view the first of the ten fetters to be eradicated on the path to liberation. The most common way the suttas distinguish between "the uninstructed worldling" (*assutavā puthujjana*) and "the instructed noble disciple" (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*) is precisely by way of identity view: the worldling perpetually regards the aggregates as a self or a self's accessories;

the noble disciple never does so, for such a disciple has seen with wisdom the selfless nature of the aggregates (22:1, etc.).

As the formula for dependent origination demonstrates, clinging to the five aggregates is ultimately sustained by ignorance (*avijjā*). In relation to the aggregates, ignorance weaves a net of three delusions that nurture desire and lust. These delusions, which infiltrate cognition at a variety of levels, are the notions that the five aggregates are permanent, a true source of happiness, and a self or the accessories of a self. The antidote needed to break the spell of this delusion is wisdom (*paññā*) or knowledge (*vijjā*), which means knowing and seeing the five aggregates as they really are: as impermanent (*anicca*), as suffering (*dukkha*), and as nonself (*anattā*). These are known in the Buddhist tradition as the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), and in the *Khandhasamyutta* they are extensively applied to the five aggregates in a variety of patterns. The suttas devoted to this theme can be highly repetitive, but the repetition is designed to serve a vital purpose: to strip away the delusions of permanence, pleasure, and selfhood that envelop the five aggregates and keep us trapped in the chain of dependent origination.

Perhaps the original nucleus of the *Khandhasamyutta* consisted of the template suttas at 22:9–20, along with the auxiliary template suttas prevalent in *The Final Fifty*. These suttas were never intended to be read merely to gather information, but to offer concise instructions on the development of insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Behind the repetitive utterances, occasionally irksome on first acquaintance, the attentive eye can discern subtle variations attuned to the diversity in the proclivities and intellectual capacities of the people to be guided. Some suttas seem to make the contemplation of one or another of the three characteristics alone sufficient for reaching the goal, though the exegetical texts insist that all must be contemplated to some degree. As the three characteristics are closely intertwined, the most common formula throughout the *Nikāyas* is the one that discloses their internal relationship. This formula, first enunciated in the Buddha's second discourse at *Bārāṇasī* (22:59), uses the characteristic of impermanence to reveal the characteristic of suffering, and both conjointly to reveal the characteristic of nonself. But whatever approach is taken, all the different expositions of the three characteristics eventually converge on the eradication of clinging by

showing, with regard to each aggregate, "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." The lesson this maxim teaches is that there is no point in appropriating anything, no point in identifying with anything, because the subject of appropriation and identification, the "self," is merely a fabrication of conceptual thought woven in the darkness of ignorance.

Different suttas within the *Khandhasamyutta* speak of the three characteristics under various synonyms, and to navigate one's way through this chapter it is important to recognize which characteristic is being indicated. Thus the statement that the five aggregates are "impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, to vanishing, to fading away, to cessation" (22:21) is obviously using different terms to point out the characteristic of impermanence. Less obviously, the sutta on the fragile (22:32) and the two on arising, vanishing, and alteration (22:37, 38) are doing the same thing. The suttas that speak of knowing the aggregates as subject to arising and vanishing are also commending contemplation of impermanence (22:126–28). Such suttas as the one on the burden (22:22), on misery (22:31), and on being devoured (22:79), emphasize the contemplation of suffering. Among the many suttas that directly expound nonself, one that deserves special attention is the discourse on the lump of foam (22:95), with its striking similes for the empty, insubstantial nature of the aggregates.

Besides the three characteristics, the *Khandhasamyutta* makes use of other patterns as guidelines for contemplation and understanding. The "gratification triad" is often applied to the aggregates (22:26, 107, 130), sometimes expanded into a pentad by the addition of "origin and passing away" (22:108, 132). Another is the four-truth pattern: understanding each aggregate, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation (22:56, 114). A sevenfold hybrid is obtained by merging the four-truth pattern with the gratification triad (22:57). In two suttas (22:122, 123) the Venerable *Sāriputta* recommends a scheme of eleven ways of attending to the aggregates, obtained by differentiating various aspects of the three characteristics. This method of contemplation, he says, leads all the way from the first steps on the path of meditation to the final stage of arahantship and can even be recommended to the arahant.

According to a stock formula attached to most of the suttas on

the three characteristics, the insight into the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering, and nonself induces revulsion (*nibbidā*), dispassion (*virāga*), and liberation (*vimutti*). Revulsion is explained by the commentaries as a profound inward turning away from conditioned existence that comes with the higher stages of insight. Dispassion is the supramundane path, particularly the path of arahantship, which eliminates the last traces of craving. Dispassion culminates in liberation, the release of the mind from clinging and the taints, and liberation is in turn ascertained by the subsequent "knowledge and vision of liberation," a reviewing knowledge that gives the assurance that the round of rebirths has been stopped and nothing further remains to be done.

The *Khandhasamyutta* shows that the elimination of clinging occurs in two distinct stages. The first is the elimination of the conceptual types of clinging expressed by wrong views, above all by identity view. This stage of release comes with the breakthrough to the Dhamma, the attainment of stream-entry. At this point the disciple sees the selfless nature of the aggregates and thus overcomes all views of self. For this reason the defining mark of the "instructed noble disciple," the one who has made the breakthrough, is the elimination of every kind of identity view. However, disciples in training (*sekha*), even those at the penultimate stage of nonreturner, still retain a subtle notion of "I am" that continues to linger over the five aggregates like the scent of soap over newly washed clothes. This is spoken of as "a residual conceit 'I am,' a desire 'I am,' an underlying tendency 'I am'" (22:89). However, as the noble disciple continues to contemplate the rise and fall of the aggregates, in time even this residual notion of "I am" disappears. It is only the arahant who has fully understood the five aggregates down to the root and thus eradicated the subtlest tendencies to self-affirmation.

Elsewhere in the *Khandhasamyutta* the distinction between the trainee and the arahant is drawn in other terms, based on the same principle but differently expressed. Sutta 22:56 explains that trainees have directly known the five aggregates by way of the four-truth pattern and are practising for their fading away and cessation; thereby they "have gained a foothold in this Dhamma and Discipline." Arahants have also directly known the five aggregates by way of the four-truth pattern, but they have extirpated all attachment to the aggregates and are liberated by

nonclinging; thus they are called consummate ones for whom "there is no round for describing them" (see too 22:57, which expands the sphere of direct knowledge into a sevenfold pattern). While direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) of the aggregates is ascribed to both trainees and arahants, only arahants are said to have full understanding (*pariññā*) of the aggregates, for full understanding implies the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion (22:106; see too 22:23). At 22:79 the trainee is described as one who is abandoning the five aggregates and does not cling to them. The arahant, in contrast, is one who neither abandons nor clings, but "abides having abandoned." And at 22:109-10, the stream-enterer is defined as one who understands the five aggregates by way of their origin, passing away, gratification, danger, and escape, while the arahant is one who, having understood the aggregates thus, is liberated by nonclinging. Thus these passages indicate the essential difference between the trainee and the arahant to consist in the extent to which they have developed liberating knowledge. The trainee has arrived at this knowledge and thereby eliminated the conceptually explicit types of ignorance crystallized in wrong views, but he has not yet fully utilized it to eradicate the emotively tinged types of ignorance manifest as clinging. The arahant has mastered this knowledge and fully developed it, so that in his mind all the defilements along with the subtlest shades of ignorance have been abolished. The trainee might be compared to a person walking along a mountain path who catches a distant glimpse of a splendid city but must still walk across several more mountains to reach his destination. The arahant is like one who has arrived at the city and now dwells comfortably within its bounds.

Beneath its repetitiveness and copious use of template formulas, the *Khandhasamyutta* is a rich compilation of texts, and no brief introduction can do justice to all its suggestive themes. Special mention, however, might be made of the *Theravagga*, the fourth *vagga*, on the elder monks. Here we find Ānanda's first-hand account of his breakthrough to the Dhamma while listening to a discourse on the aggregates (22:83); Sāriputta's refutation of the annihilationist interpretation of Nibbāna (22:85); Anurādha's puzzlement about the Tathāgata's status after death (22:86); the story of Vakkali, who attained final Nibbāna while dying at his own hand (22:87); the *Khemaka Sutta*, on the distinction between

the trainee and the arahant (22:89); and the story of the refractory monk Channa whose change of heart proved abundantly fruitful (22:90).

### 23. *Rādhasaṃyutta*

This *saṃyutta* is virtually an appendix to the *Khandhasaṃyutta* as it revolves entirely around the five aggregates, but it has a distinct internal unity in that all its suttas are addressed to a single bhikkhu named Rādha. According to the commentary, the Buddha liked to speak to this monk on deep and subtle matters, and thus a large number of texts have come down through him. The *saṃyutta* consists of four vaggas with a total of forty-six suttas, all relating to the aggregates. Suttas 23:4–10 have exact counterparts in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*. The contents of the second and third vagga largely overlap, while the third and fourth vaggas are identical except for the circumstances of their delivery.

### 24. *Diṭṭhisāṃyutta*

This *saṃyutta*, too, is an extension of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, an outgrowth of its last vagga, called *Diṭṭhivagga* and dealing with views. However, while the *Diṭṭhivagga* focuses only on a few basic views, here an attempt is made to cover a much wider range. The aim of the chapter is to show, from various angles, how all these views originate from clinging to the five aggregates.

The views fall into several distinct classes: first comes a strange philosophy, not encountered elsewhere in the *Nikāyas*, but apparently a species of eternalism; then come several familiar views—the view “this is mine,” etc., eternalism, and annihilationism (24:2–4). This is followed by four philosophical theories advocated by the Buddha’s contemporaries, all of which he condemned as morally pernicious (24:5–8); and next come the ten speculative views that the Buddha consistently rejected as invalid (24:9–18). Beginning with the second vagga, eighteen additional views are introduced, all concerning the nature of the self after death (24:19–36). It is unclear why these views are not included in the first vagga, as they would have fit in there without any difficulty.

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The *saṃyutta* contains four vaggas, which centre upon the same collection of views, except that the first vagga lacks the eighteen views of self. Each mode of treatment in the four vaggas is called a “trip” (*gamana*), though the word appears only from the second vagga on. The suttas of the first trip define the mark of the stream-enterer as the overcoming of perplexity (*kaṅkhā*) regarding six things—namely, the arising of views from clinging to the five aggregates and the four types of sense objects (the four counted as one), which are impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—and the overcoming of perplexity about the Four Noble Truths. The second shows that since the five aggregates are impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, views arise by clinging and adhering to suffering. The third includes the refrain that the views arise by clinging to the five aggregates, which are suffering because they are impermanent. The fourth applies the catechism, “Is form permanent or impermanent?” to the five aggregates to expose their nature as nonself, showing how liberation arises through realizing the selflessness of the aggregates.

### 25. *Okkantisaṃyutta*

### 26. *Uppādasāṃyutta*

### 27. *Kilesasaṃyutta*

These three *saṃyuttas* can be treated together, as they are each built upon a common foundation, differing only in the way they use this material to articulate their distinctive themes. The foundation on which they are built is a tenfold scheme for classifying the factors of experience already encountered in the *Rāhulasāṃyutta* (18): the six internal sense bases; the six external sense bases; the six classes each of consciousness, contact, feeling, perception, volition, and craving; the six elements; and the five aggregates. Thus each *saṃyutta* contains ten suttas, one devoted to each group of items.

In relation to these ten groups, the *Okkantisaṃyutta* makes a distinction between two types of individuals who enter upon “the fixed course of rightness” (*sammattaniyāma*), i.e., the transcendental Noble Eightfold Path, the path of stream-entry. The difference between them is determined by their dominant faculty. The one who emphasizes faith resolves (*adhimuccati*) on the impermanence of the factors in the ten groups; this type of person



is called a faith-follower (*saddhānusāri*). The one who emphasizes wisdom gains understanding of the impermanence of the factors in the ten groups; this type of person is called a Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusāri*). Of both it is said that they cannot pass away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry. Regardless of this distinction in means of entering the path, when they know and see the truth of the teaching for themselves, they become stream-enterers. This *saṃyutta* does not distinguish between their character as stream-enterers, but elsewhere (MN I 478) it is indicated that the stream-enterer who gives prominence to faith is called "liberated by faith" (*saddhāvimutta*) while one who gives prominence to wisdom is called "attained by view" (*ditthippatta*). A third class, without counterpart among path-attainers, consists of one who gains the formless meditations; this type is known as a "body-witness" (*kāyasakkhi*).

#### 28. *Sāriputtasamyutta*

The Venerable Sāriputta was the Buddha's foremost disciple with respect to wisdom, but here he is depicted as an adept in meditation as well. The first nine suttas of the *saṃyutta* are composed from a stereotyped formula in which Sāriputta explains how he enters and emerges from the nine meditative attainments without giving rise to ego-affirming thoughts. Each time his reply is applauded by Ānanda. In the tenth sutta Sāriputta replies to some provocative questions from a female wanderer and his answers win her approval.

#### 29. *Nāgasamyutta*

#### 30. *Supaṇṇasamyutta*

#### 31. *Gandhabbasamyutta*

#### 32. *Valāhakasamyutta*

These four *saṃyuttas* can be discussed together, as they all deal with certain classes of sentient beings that, from a modern perspective, would be considered mythological. In each the Buddha enumerates the different species into which the class can be divided and the courses of kamma that lead to rebirth into that particular mode of existence. By counting separately each type of gift given by the aspirant for rebirth into those destinies, and con-

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necting them with the subdivisions among the beings, a large number of very short suttas are generated.

The *nāgas* are dragons, serpent-like beings, powerful and mysterious, believed to reside in the Himalayas, beneath the earth, and in the depths of the ocean. They are often thought to have access to hidden treasures and the ability to grant favours to their human benefactors. They also appear on earth and can assume human form, though only temporarily. The Vinaya Piṭaka even relates the story of a *nāga* who obtained ordination as a *bhikkhu* but was forced to relinquish his monastic status; as a result, every candidate for ordination must affirm, before the Saṅgha, that he is a human being (and not a *nāga* in disguise; see Vin I 86-87). The *supaṇṇas*, identical with the *garuḍas*, are their arch-enemies: fierce birds of prey that pounce on unwary *nāgas*, carry them away, and devour them. The *gandhabbas* are more benign: though sometimes depicted as celestial musicians, here they are obviously plant deities. They are identified as the spirits of fragrant plants because *gandha* means fragrance. The identity of the *valāhakas* or cloud-dwelling devas is evident from the explanation given in the texts.

These beings do not fit neatly into the scheme of cosmology outlined in the Introduction to Part I. The *nāgas* and *gandhabbas* are said to be ruled over by two of the Four Great Kings presiding over the heaven of that name, though as depicted here they can hardly be described as dwelling in heavenly worlds themselves. Rather, all these beings seem to belong to an intermediate zone between the human world and the lowest heaven, twilight creatures described with striking uniformity in the mythologies of many different cultures.

#### 33. *Vacchagottasamyutta*

Vacchagotta was a wanderer who often approached the Buddha to ask questions, almost always of a philosophical hue. Finally convinced, he became a *bhikkhu* and attained arahantship (see MN Nos. 71-73).

This *saṃyutta* shows him during his phase as an inquirer. The *saṃyutta* has fifty-five chapters, undivided into *vaggas*, created by a process of permutation. In the first five suttas, in response to Vaccha's questions, the Buddha explains why the ten speculative

views arise in the world, namely, from not knowing the five aggregates. Each sutta deals with a separate aggregate, treated by way of the four-truth pattern; hence five suttas. The remaining fifty suttas are created by taking ten synonyms for not knowing—e.g., not seeing, etc.—and relating them individually to the five aggregates in exactly the same way.

#### 34. *Jhānasamyutta*

This *samyutta* is concerned with the types of skills required for success in attaining concentration (*samādhi*). Despite the title, it does not deal explicitly with the *jhānas* as states of meditation but with the process of meditation. A proper *Jhānasamyutta*, concerned with the *jhānas*, is found in Part V. Perhaps at one point this chapter was called the *Jhāyanasamyutta*, which seems more appropriate. The *samyutta* explores, in pairwise combinations, ten meditative skills. Each pair is related to four types of meditators: one who possesses one skill but not the other, one who has neither, and one who has both. In each case the last in the tetrad is extolled as the best. In this way fifty-five suttas are generated covering all possible permutations.

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[1] PART III: The Book of the Aggregates (*Khandhavagga*)

*Homage to the Blessed One,  
the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One*

#### Chapter I

### 22 *Khandhasamyutta*

## Connected Discourses on the Aggregates

Division I  
THE ROOT FIFTY

I. NAKULAPITĀ

#### 1 (1) *Nakulapitā*

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Bhaggas at Suṃsumāragira in the Bhesakalā Grove, the Deer Park. Then the householder Nakulapitā approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him:<sup>1</sup>

“I am old, venerable sir, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage, afflicted in body, often ill. I rarely get to see the Blessed One and the bhikkhus worthy of esteem.<sup>2</sup> Let the Blessed One exhort me, venerable sir, let him instruct me, since that would lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time.”

“So it is, householder, so it is! This body of yours is afflicted, weighed down, encumbered.<sup>3</sup> If anyone carrying around this body were to claim to be healthy even for a moment, what is that due to other than foolishness? Therefore, householder, you

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THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

The  
Connected  
Discourses  
of the  
Buddha



A New Translation of the  
Samyutta Nikāya



Translated from the Pāli

by

Bhikkhu Bodhi

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## Introduction

The *Salāyatanaṅgaḥ*, The Book of the Six Sense Bases, is the third great collection of connected discourses with a philosophical orientation. Like its two predecessors, the *Vagga* is dominated by its first chapter, the *Salāyatanaṣaṃyutta*, which takes up 208 of the 403 pages in the PTS edition of this volume. Its junior partner is the *Vedanāsaṃyutta*, which deals with another closely related theme of the Buddha's teaching, feeling. Feeling assumes special importance because it serves as the main condition, in the doctrine of dependent origination, for the arising of craving. Feeling also finds a place among the four establishments of mindfulness, to be explored in Part V, and thus links theory with practice. The other *saṃyuttas* in this book do not have any intimate connection with the two major themes, but cover a wide variety of topics ranging from the weaknesses and strengths of women to the nature of the unconditioned.

### 35. *Salāyatanaṣaṃyutta*

The *Salāyatanaṣaṃyutta* draws together a vast assortment of texts dealing with the six internal and external sense bases. Though most of these are very short, a few, especially towards the end, tend to approach the size of the shorter discourses in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. To organize such a large number of suttas into a convenient format, the *saṃyutta* is divided into four *paññāsakas*, sets of fifty. While the first three sets of fifty actually contain roughly fifty suttas each, the fourth has ninety-three, including a single *vagga* (among four) with a full sixty suttas! This is the "Sixtyfold Repetition Series," a compilation of sixty extremely brief suttas grouped into batches of three. If each of the

triplets were to be compressed into a single sutta, as Feer has done in Ee, we would then get a vagga of twenty suttas, the number counted by Feer. But Be and Se, followed here, count the triplets as three individual suttas, thus yielding sixty suttas, a total supported by the title of the vagga. Principally on account of this difference in the treatment of the repetition series, Ee has a total of 207 suttas while the present translation has 248; the additional difference of one obtains because Feer has combined two suttas which clearly should have been kept distinct.

On first consideration, it would seem that the six internal and external sense bases should be understood simply as the six sense faculties and their objects, with the term *āyatana*, base, having the sense of origin or source. Though many suttas lend support to this supposition, the Theravāda exegetical tradition, beginning already from the Abhidhamma period, understands the six pairs of bases as a complete scheme of classification capable of accommodating all the factors of existence mentioned in the Nikāyas. This conception of the six bases probably originated from the Sabba Sutta (35:23), in which the Buddha says that the six pairs of bases are "the all" apart from which nothing at all exists. To make the six bases capable of literally incorporating everything, the *Vibhaṅga* of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka defines the mind base (*manāyatana*) as including all classes of consciousness, and the mental phenomena base (*dhammāyatana*) as including the other three mental aggregates, subtle nonsensuous types of form, and even the unconditioned element, Nibbāna (see Vibh 70–73).

Seen from this angle, the six internal and external sense bases offer an alternative to the five aggregates as a scheme of phenomenological classification. The relationship between the two schemes might be seen as roughly analogous to that between horizontal and vertical cross-sections of an organ, with the analysis by way of the aggregates corresponding to the horizontal slice, the analysis by way of the six sense bases to the vertical slice (see Table 6). Thus, we are told, on an occasion of visual cognition, eye-consciousness arises in dependence on the eye and forms; the meeting of the three is contact; and with contact as condition there arise feeling, perception, and volition. Viewing this experience "vertically" by way of the sense bases, the eye and visible forms are each a separate base, respectively the eye base and the form base; eye-consciousness belongs to the mind

base; and eye-contact, feeling, perception, and volition are all assigned to the mental phenomena base. Then, using the scalpel of thought to cut "horizontally" across the occasion of visual cognition, we can ask what is present from the form aggregate? The eye and a visible form (and the body as the physical basis of consciousness). What from the feeling aggregate? A feeling born of eye-contact. What from the perception aggregate? A perception of a visible form. What from the aggregate of volitional formations? A volition regarding a form. And what from the consciousness aggregate? An act of eye-consciousness.

TABLE 6

An Occasion of Visual Cognition in Terms  
of the Aggregates and Sense Bases

Aggregates	Visual Cognition	Sense Bases
form	<i>eye</i> <i>form</i>	eye base form base
consciousness	<i>eye-consciousness</i>	mind base
(volitional formations)	<i>eye-contact</i>	mental phenomena base
feeling	<i>feeling born of eye-contact</i>	mental phenomena base
perception	<i>perception of form</i>	mental phenomena base
volitional formations	<i>volition regarding form</i>	mental phenomena base

Note: Contact (*phassa*) is classified in the aggregate of volitional formations in the Abhidhamma and the commentaries, though in the Nikāyas it is not explicitly assigned a place among the five aggregates.

Strangely, though some connection between the aggregates and sense bases, as just sketched, is already suggested in at least two suttas (35:93, 121), the Nikāyas do not explicitly correlate the two schemes. Conscious correlation begins only with the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, especially in the opening sections of the *Dhātukathā*, which reflects the attempt of the early Buddhist community to merge the more pragmatic schemes of the suttas into a single all-inclusive system that assigned to every element a precisely defined place.

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Nevertheless, though this treatment of the sense bases stems from an early period, the Nikāyas themselves usually present the six pairs of sense bases not as a complete phenomenological scheme but as starting points for the genesis of cognition. Often, because of their role in mediating between consciousness and its objects, the internal bases are spoken of as the "bases for contact" (*phassāyatana*). If this interpretation is adopted, then mind (*mano*), the base for the arising of mind-consciousness (*manoviññāna*), probably denotes the passive flow of mind from which active cognition emerges, and *dhammā* the nonsensuous objects of consciousness apprehended by introspection, imagination, and reflection.

As with the aggregates, so with the sense bases, concern with their classification and interactions is governed not by an interest in theoretical completeness but by the practical exigencies of the Buddha's path aimed at liberation from suffering. The sense bases are critically important because it is through them that suffering arises (35:106). Even more, it is said that the holy life is lived under the Buddha for the full understanding of suffering, and if others should ask what is the suffering that should be fully understood, the correct answer is that the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, etc., and all phenomena derived from them, are the suffering that should be fully understood (35:81, 152).

The main pragmatic concern with the sense bases is the eradication of clinging, for like the aggregates the sense bases serve as the soil where clinging takes root and thrives. Because clinging originates from ignorance and craving, and because ignorance sustains clinging by weaving its web of the triple delusion—permanence, happiness, and self—we find in the *Salāyatana-saṃyutta* almost all the familiar templates used in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*; often, in fact, these templates are here applied twice to generate parallel suttas for the internal and external sense bases. Thus, to dispel ignorance and generate true knowledge, we repeatedly hear the same melodies, in a slightly different key, reminding us that the sense bases and their derivatives are impermanent, suffering, and nonself; that we must discern the gratification, danger, and escape in regard to the sense bases; that we should abandon desire and lust for the sense bases.

However, despite large areas of convergence between the two *saṃyuttas*, the *Salāyatana-saṃyutta* introduces several new per-

spectives that bear on the sense bases but have no exact parallels in relation to the aggregates. Thus the *saṃyutta* includes a long chain of twenty suttas which expose the flaws in conditioned existence, summed up under the caption "the all." All, it is said, is subject to birth, aging, sickness, death, and so forth, and the all is nothing other than the sense bases and the mental processes arising from them (35:33–42). Several suttas in this chapter identify the six sense bases with the world, because the world (*loka*) is whatever disintegrates (*lujjati*), and because in the Noble One's Discipline the world is understood as "that in the world by which one is a perceiver and conceiver of the world" (35:82, 84, 116). In one sutta the question is raised why the world is said to be empty (*suñña*), and the answer given is because the six bases are empty of a self and of what belongs to self (35:85). No parallels to these discourses are found in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*. This *saṃyutta* also describes the six internal sense bases as "old kamma" (35:146), which could not be said so plainly about the aggregates, for they comprise both kammically active and resultant phases of experience. We further find here that greater stress is placed on "conceiving" (*maññita*), the distorted cognitions influenced by craving, conceit, and views, with several discourses devoted to the methods of contemplation for uprooting all conceivings (35:30–32, 90–91). The entire *saṃyutta* ends with a masterly discourse in which the Buddha urges the monks to uproot conceiving in all its guises (35:248).

Although the aggregates and sense bases jointly serve as the domain of craving and wrong views, a difference in emphasis can be discerned in the way the two *saṃyuttas* connect these two defilements to their respective domains. The *Khandhasaṃyutta* consistently treats the aggregates as the objective referent of identity view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), the views that seek to give substance to the idea of a self. When the *puṭhujjana* or "worldling" fashions a view about his or her identity, he or she always does so in relation to the five aggregates. We do not find any parallel text expressing identity view in terms of the sense bases. This difference in emphasis is understandable when we realize that the scheme of the aggregates spans a wider spectrum of categories than the sense bases themselves and therefore offers the worldling more variety to choose from when attempting to give substance to the notion of "my self." This, it must be stressed,

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indicates a difference in emphasis, not a fundamental doctrinal difference, for the sense bases can be grasped upon with the notions "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" just as tenaciously as the aggregates can. Thus we even find a series of three suttas which state that contemplating the sense bases as impermanent, suffering, and nonself leads respectively to the abandoning of wrong view, identity view, and view of self (35:165–67). However, as a general rule, the sense bases are not taken up for a thematic exposition of identity view in the way the five aggregates are, which is certainly significant. We see too that the entire *Diṭṭhisamyutta*, on the diversity of views, traces all these views to a misapprehension of the aggregates, not of the sense bases.

In relation to the sense bases the interest in views recedes into the background, and a new theme takes centre stage: the need to control and master the senses. It is the sense faculties that give us access to the agreeable and disagreeable phenomena of the world, and it is our spontaneous, impulsive responses to these phenomena that sow the seeds of so much suffering. Within the untrained mind lust, hatred, and delusion, the three roots of evil, are always lying latent, and with delusion obscuring the true nature of things, agreeable objects are bound to provoke lust and greed, disagreeable objects hatred and aversion. These spontaneous reactions flood the mind and bid for our consent. If we are not careful we may rush ahead in pursuit of immediate gratification, oblivious to the fact that the fruit of sensual enjoyment is misery (see 35:94–98).

To inculcate sense restraint, the *Salāyatanaṅga* makes constant use of two formulas. One is the stock description of sense restraint (*indriyaśamvara*) usually embedded in the sequence on the gradual training, common in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (e.g., at I 70) and the *Majjhima Nikāya* (e.g., at I 180–81). This formula enjoins the practice of sense restraint to keep the "evil unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure" from invading the mind. In the present chapter it occurs at 35:120, 127, 239, 240, and elsewhere. The second formula posits a contrast between one who is "intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form" and one who is not swayed by these pairs of opposites. The latter has set up mindfulness of the body, dwells with a measureless mind, and understands the "liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom" where the evil states of lust and

aversion cease without remainder. This formula is found at 35:132, 243, 244, and 247. Though no explicit doctrinal allocations are made for these two formulas, it seems the first is prescribed in general for a bhikkhu in the initial stages of training, while the second describes the sense restraint of the trainee (*sekha*), one at a minimal level of stream-enterer, perhaps too the natural sense restraint of the arahant.

The practice of sense restraint is necessary in the Buddhist training, not only to avoid the mental distress provoked here and now by attachment and aversion, but for a reason more deeply connected to the ultimate aim of the Dhamma. The doctrine of dependent origination reveals that craving is the propelling cause of suffering, and craving springs up with feeling as its proximate cause. Feeling occurs in the six sense bases, as pleasant, painful, and neutral feeling, and through our unwholesome responses to these feelings we nourish the craving that holds us in bondage. To gain full deliverance from suffering, craving must be contained and eradicated, and thus the restraint of the senses becomes an integral part of the discipline aimed at the removal of craving.

There is also a cognitive side to the teaching on sense restraint. Craving and other defilements arise and flourish because the mind seizes upon the "signs" (*nimitta*) and "features" (*anubyañjana*) of sensory objects and uses them as raw material for creating imaginative constructs, to which it clings as a basis for security. This process, called mental proliferation (*papañca*), is effectively synonymous with conceiving (*maññanā*). These constructs, created under the influence of the defilements, serve in turn as springboards for still stronger and more tenacious defilements, thus sustaining a vicious cycle. To break this cycle, what is needed as a preliminary step is to restrain the senses, which involves stopping at the bare sensum, without plastering it over with layers of meaning whose origins are purely subjective. Hence the Buddha's instructions to the bhikkhu Māluṅkyaputta, "In the seen there will be merely the seen," and the beautiful poem the bhikkhu composes to convey his understanding of this maxim (35:95; see too 35:94).

This aspect of sense restraint receives special emphasis in the last two vaggas of the *Salāyatanaṅga*, which stand out by reason of their startling imagery and extended similes. Here the

six sense faculties are spoken of as an ocean, the sense objects as their current, and the faring along the spiritual path as a voyage in which we are exposed to dangers that we can only surmount by sense restraint (35:228). Again, agreeable sense objects are like baited hooks cast out by Māra; one who swallows them comes under Māra's control; one who resists them escapes unharmed (35:230). It is better, we are told, to have our sense faculties lacerated by sharp instruments, hot and glowing, than to become infatuated with attractive sense objects; for such infatuation can lead to rebirth in the lower realms (35:235). Our existential condition is depicted by the parable of a man pursued by four vipers, five murderous enemies, and an assassin, his only means to safety a handmade raft (35:238). A bhikkhu in training should draw his senses inward as a tortoise draws its limbs into its shell, for Māra is like a hungry jackal trying to get a grip on him (35:240). The six senses are like six animals each drawn to their natural habitat, which must be tied by the rope of sense restraint and bound to the strong post of body-directed mindfulness (35:247). The saṃyutta ends with a parable about the magical bonds of the asura-king Vepacitti and sounds a decisive call to eliminate all modes of conceiving rooted in craving and wrong views (35:248).

### 36. *Vedanāsaṃyutta*

Although feeling has often been mentioned as a product of contact at the six sense bases, since it is a potent force in the activation of the defilements it receives separate treatment in a saṃyutta of its own, with three vaggas containing thirty-one suttas. The Sinhala-script editions of SN include this chapter in the *Salāyatana*saṃyutta, presumably because feeling arises through the six sense bases. In the present collection of suttas, however, feeling is seldom correlated with the sense bases but is far more often expounded by way of its threefold division into the pleasant, painful, and neutral (i.e., neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling). Thus it seems better to follow the Burmese textual tradition, which treats this chapter as a separate saṃyutta.

Feeling is a key link in the chain of dependent origination, the immediate precursor of craving, and thus to break the chain requires that our defiled responses to feeling be overcome. For

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this reason the Buddha has made feeling one of the four "establishments of mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*) and here he assigns it a saṃyutta of its own. Several suttas in the first vagga explain that the three types of feelings serve as stimuli for the "underlying tendencies" (*anusaya*). Each feeling is correlated with a different tendency: pleasant feeling with lust, painful feeling with aversion, and neutral feeling with ignorance. The Buddha's system of mental training aims at controlling our reactions to these feelings at the very point where they arise, without allowing them to proliferate and call their corresponding tendencies into play (36:3, 4). The noble disciple, of course, continues to experience feeling as long as he lives, but by eradicating the underlying tendencies he cannot be inwardly perturbed by feelings (36:6). In two suttas we see the Buddha visit the sick ward and give profound discourses on the contemplation of feelings to ailing monks (36:7, 8). These suttas culminate in a description of the arahant and his inner detachment from feelings.

A long sutta in the second vagga (36:19) describes the calibration in types of happiness that human beings can experience, ranging from sensual happiness to the bliss of the cessation of feeling and perception. In the third vagga we find a classification of illnesses (36:21) commonly used in traditional Indian medicine, and also a detailed numerical classification of the different types of feelings along the lines that became prominent in the *Abhidhamma* (36:22). The final sutta offers an interesting gradation of rapture, happiness, equanimity, and deliverance into three levels each—as carnal, spiritual, and "more spiritual than the spiritual" (36:31).

### 37. *Mātugāmasaṃyutta*

This saṃyutta brings together thirty-four short suttas on women. The Buddha explains what makes a woman attractive to a man, the kinds of suffering peculiar to women, and the moral qualities that lead a woman to either a bad rebirth or a good one. In this sutta the Venerable Anuruddha plays a major role, since his skill in the divine eye led him to make inquiries about such matters from the Master. The Buddha also explains how a woman wins the goodwill of her husband and his parents, the most important qualification being a virtuous character.



38. *Jambukhāḍakasamyutta*39. *Sāmaṇḍakasamyutta*

These two *samyuttas*, with sixteen *suttas* each, have identical contents and differ only with respect to the interlocutors, two wanderers who lend their names to the two collections. The second is almost totally abridged. The *suttas* take the form of questions addressed to Sāriputta on such topics as Nibbāna, arahantship, the taints, the realms of existence, etc. Each ends with words of praise for the Noble Eightfold Path. The last *sutta*, which differs from this format, displays a gentle touch of humour.

40. *Moggallānasamyutta*

Mahāmoggallāna was the Buddha's second chief disciple. In the first nine *suttas* here he describes his struggle for enlightenment, which was beset with difficulties in meditation. On each occasion he could overcome his difficulty only with the aid of the Buddha, who used his psychic powers to give the disciple "long-distance" guidance. In the last two *suttas* Moggallāna visits the heavens and preaches to the *devas* on the going for refuge to the Triple Gem. The first of these texts is extensive, the second (identical except for the audience) drastically abridged.

41. *Cittasamyutta*

Citta was a householder who was named by the Buddha the foremost male lay disciple among the speakers on the Dhamma (AN I 26,5). The present *samyutta* collects ten *suttas* that corroborate this designation. Even when Citta assumes the role of questioner rather than respondent, we are given to understand that he already knows the answers and is posing his questions as a way of starting a Dhamma discussion with the monks. Several times we see him teaching the Dhamma to *bhikkhus*, and the *bhikkhus* applaud him as one who has "the eye of wisdom that ranges over the deep Word of the Buddha" (41:1, 5, 7). The portrait of Citta we find in this chapter evinces a genuine historical personality, a layman with wide knowledge of the teaching, deep experience in meditation, sharp wisdom, and a mischievous

sense of humour. The humour surfaces in his meeting with the Jain teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, whom he leads into an embarrassing verbal trap (41:8). On meeting an old friend of his, who had been a naked ascetic for thirty years but had gained nothing from his asceticism but nakedness and a shaved head, he claims to have gained such high attainments as the four *jhānas* and the fruit of nonreturning even while living as a householder (41:9). Even his deathbed scene conveys a sense of humour: when his relatives think he is babbling to himself, he is actually teaching the *devas* a lesson in impermanence (41:10).

42. *Gāmaṇīsamyutta*

This collection of thirteen *suttas* is united by the fact that all the inquirers are described as *gāmaṇīs*, headmen of various sorts. With a few exceptions, the inquirers are initially not followers of the Buddha and are sometimes hostile to him, but in each case the Buddha wins them over with his reasoned arguments and careful analyses of the problems they pose.

Among the headmen we meet Talapuṭa, a theatre director who was so moved by his conversation with the Buddha that he became a *bhikkhu* and attained arahantship (42:2). His verses (at Th 1091–1145) are masterly expressions of deep spiritual yearning. We also see a follower of the Jains come to the Buddha with the intention of tripping him up in debate, only to be stopped in his tracks and led to correct understanding (42:9). The long discourse to Rāsiya (42:12) distinguishes householders along a finely graded scale of excellence, and also evaluates different types of ascetics. In the final *sutta* the Buddha responds to the charge, apparently devised by envious rivals, that he is a magician (42:13).

43. *Asaṅkhatasamyutta*

This *samyutta* functions as a compendium of the different designations of Nibbāna and the various modes of practice that lead to Nibbāna. The first *vagga*, which speaks of Nibbāna as the unconditioned, offers eleven presentations of the path to the unconditioned (43:1–11). The second *vagga* begins again with the unconditioned, and in one vast *sutta* (43:12) enumerates under

forty-five headings the various path factors that constitute the way to the unconditioned, including those of 43:2-11 divided into their components. Thereafter, in 43:13-44, Nibbāna is expounded by way of another thirty-two epithets; the presentation of the path here is drastically condensed, but the text implies that all the factors of the first twelve suttas should be connected with each epithet. If 43:12 were to be broken up into separate suttas by way of the path factors, and these added to the first eleven suttas, we would then have fifty-six suttas on the unconditioned alone. And if this method were then to be applied to each epithet, the number of suttas in this saṃyutta would total 1,848.

#### 44. *Abyākatasaṃyutta*

The suttas in this saṃyutta all respond to the question why the Buddha has not adopted any of the metaphysical tenets advocated and hotly debated by his contemporaries. Of particular concern is the problem whether the Tathāgata exists after death. The first sutta features a discussion on this topic between King Pasenadi of Kosala and the bhikkhuni Khemā, the nun foremost in wisdom, whose profound reply to the king is later affirmed by the Master (44:1). The suttas in this chapter are enough to dispose of the common assumption that the Buddha refrained from adopting any of these metaphysical standpoints merely on pragmatic grounds, i.e., because they are irrelevant to the quest for deliverance from suffering. The answers given to the queries show that the metaphysical tenets are rejected primarily because, at the fundamental level, they all rest upon the implicit assumption of a self, an assumption which in turn springs from ignorance about the real nature of the five aggregates and the six sense bases. For one who has fathomed the real nature of these phenomena, all these speculative views turn out to be untenable.

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[1] PART IV: The Book of the Six Sense Bases (*Salāyatanaṅga*)

*Homage to the Blessed One,  
the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One*

### Chapter I

## 35 *Salāyatanaṅga* Connected Discourses on the Six Sense Bases

Division I  
THE ROOT FIFTY

I. THE IMPERMANENT.

#### 1 (1) *The Internal as Impermanent*<sup>1</sup>

Thus have I heard.<sup>2</sup> On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus!"

"Venerable sir!" those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

"Bhikkhus, the eye is impermanent.<sup>3</sup> What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is nonself. What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'

"The ear is impermanent.... The nose is impermanent.... The tongue is impermanent.... The body is impermanent.... The mind is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is nonself. What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' [2]

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## Introduction

The fifth and final part of the Saṃyutta Nikāya is the *Mahāvagga*, The Great Book. There are at least three explanations that might be given for this title. First, it is the largest division of SN, and could become exponentially larger if the abbreviated repetition series, at the end of many chapters, were to be expanded in full. Second, we find here, not one giant saṃyutta towering over a retinue of lesser peaks, but a veritable Himalayan range of saṃyuttas, with at least eight major chapters among a total of twelve. And third, almost all the saṃyuttas in this book deal with different formulations of the Buddha's path to liberation, the most precious part of his legacy to the world.

A glance at the contents of the Mahāvagga shows that its first seven chapters are devoted to seven sets of training factors which occur elsewhere in the Pāli Canon, though in a different sequence. In the standard sequence these are:

the four establishments of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*)  
the four right strivings (*cattāro sammappadhānā*)  
the four bases for spiritual power (*cattāro iddhipādā*)  
the five spiritual faculties (*pañc' indriyāni*)  
the five powers (*pañca balāni*)  
the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*)  
the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*).

In SN we have already met these sets several times: at 22:81, when the Buddha explains how the Dhamma has been taught discriminately; at 22:101, as the things to be developed for the mind to be liberated from the taints; at 43:12, as different aspects of the path leading to the unconditioned. In the Buddhist exeget-

ical tradition, beginning very soon after the age of the canon, these seven sets are known as the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*sattatiṃsa bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*). Although this term is not used in the Nikāyas themselves as a collective appellation for the seven sets, the sets themselves frequently appear in the Nikāyas as a compendium of the practice leading to enlightenment. On several occasions the Buddha himself underlined their critical importance, referring to them, in his talks to the bhikkhus, as "the things I have taught you through direct knowledge" (*ye vo mayā dhammā abhiññā desitā*). In the prelude to his parinibbāna he urged the bhikkhus to learn, pursue, develop, and cultivate them so that the holy life would endure long in the world, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and humans (DN II 119–20). He requested the bhikkhus to meet often and recite the seven sets "meaning for meaning, phrase for phrase," without disputes, again so that the holy life would endure long (DN III 127–28). He made unity in the Sangha contingent upon concord regarding the seven sets (MN II 245) and urged the disciples to train in them "united, in concord, not disputing" (MN II 238). It is because he teaches these seven sets that his disciples venerate him, and by developing them many of these disciples have attained consummation and perfection in direct knowledge (MN II 11–12).

The presentation of the seven sets in a graded sequence might convey the impression that they constitute seven successive stages of practice. This, however, would be a misinterpretation. Close consideration of the series would show that the seven sets are ranked in a numerically ascending order, from four to eight, which means that their arrangement is purely pedagogic and implies nothing about a later set being more advanced than the earlier sets. Even more decisively, when we examine the contents of the seven sets as formally defined and explained in the suttas, we would see that their contents are inextricably interwoven. Often factors in one set are identical with those in another; sometimes one set reorders the constituents of another; sometimes one set subdivides a factor treated synoptically in another. What emerges from a close study of the seven sets, as presented in the Mahāvagga, is an array of overlapping, intersecting, mutually illuminating portraits of a single course of practice aimed at a single goal, deliverance from suffering. By presenting the course of

practice from different angles, in different keys, and with different degrees of detail, the texts are able to finely modulate the practice of the path to suit the diverse needs of the people to be trained. This accounts for the versatility of the Buddha's teaching, its ability to assume variable expressions in accordance with the different aptitudes, preferences, and propensities of different human beings.

The need for a path is bound up with the whole structure of the Dhamma, girded from below by the abstract principle of conditionality, "When this arises, that arises; when this ceases, that ceases." Bondage and suffering arise from ignorance, from a failure to see and understand the subjects treated in the earlier saṃyuttas: the five aggregates, the six sense bases, and the eighteen elements as the constituent factors of sentient existence; dependent origination as the inherent dynamism by which saṃsāra again and again renews itself from within, bringing along the suffering of repeated birth, aging, and death. To gain irreversible release from suffering we have to cut through the tangle of craving and clinging, and for this "disentanglement" to be final and complete, we must extricate the most deeply buried root of all, namely, ignorance.

The direct antidote to ignorance is knowledge—not mere conceptual knowledge, but direct insight into things as they really are—and it was one of the Buddha's key discoveries that the knowledge needed for liberation can be developed. Such knowledge does not depend on divine grace or arise as a mystical intuition, but emerges out of a matrix of persistent spiritual practice governed by a precisely articulated groundplan. This course of practice is a process of self-cultivation sustained by the unvarying laws of conditionality. The different factors embedded in the seven sets are the qualities that need to be developed. They are the conditions which, when methodically generated and fortified, directly conduce to the arising of the liberating knowledge.

The major saṃyuttas of the Mahāvagga can be seen as offering a conception of the path that is the converse of the Asaṅkhata-saṃyutta (43). The latter begins with the goal, the unconditioned, and then asks, "What is the path leading to this goal?" The answer given is framed in terms of the seven sets, and thus here the texts extract the path from the goal. The Mahāvagga takes the complementary approach. Here we begin with the seven sets and

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by following their course of movement we are brought to see that they "slant, slope, and incline towards Nibbāna" just as surely as the waters in the great Indian rivers flow towards the ocean. Thus, from the perspective offered by the *Mahāvagga*, the seven sets become the constellation of training factors that bring the realization of a goal towards which they inherently incline. We might even speak of the path factors as being "pregnant" with the goal, though we must qualify this by noting that the development of the path does not bring Nibbāna itself into being, but rather promotes the attainment of a goal which, as unconditioned, is not locked into the process of causality.

I said just above that the seven sets overlap and intersect. How this is so becomes clearer when we recognize that the terms used to designate different items among the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are often synonyms representing the same mental factor. The different names merely serve to illuminate different functions of these mental factors while the arrangement into seven sets shows how the factors can collaborate in diverse patterns of mutual support.

This aspect of the aids to enlightenment becomes more evident through the analytical treatment of the *Abhidhamma*, which collates the synonymous terms used to represent a single mental factor. A concise statement of the results obtained is found at *Vism* 680 (Ppn 22:41-43). Applied to the seven sets, we see, firstly, that one mental factor, energy (*viriyā*), occurs in nine roles: as the four right strivings; as the basis for spiritual power headed by energy; as a faculty, power, and enlightenment factor; and as the path factor of right effort. Mindfulness (*sati*) takes on eight roles: as the four establishments of mindfulness; as a faculty, power, and enlightenment factor; and as the path factor of right mindfulness. Wisdom (*paññā*) serves in five capacities: as the basis for spiritual power headed by investigation; as a faculty and power; as the enlightenment factor of discrimination; and as the path factor of right view. Concentration (*samādhi*) occurs four times under its own name: as a faculty, power, enlightenment factor, and path factor; it also participates in all four bases for spiritual power. Faith (*saddhā*) occurs twice, as a faculty and power. The other nine aids to enlightenment occur only once each. Table 7 represents this correlation visually.

TABLE 7

The Aids to Enlightenment by Way of Mental Factors  
(based on *Vism* 680 and *CMA* 7:32-33)

MENTAL FACTORS		AIDS TO ENLIGHTENMENT							
		4 establ. mindfulness	4 right strivings	4 bases for power	5 faculties	5 powers	7 enlightenment factors	8 noble path factors	Total
1	Energy		4	1	1	1	1	1	9
2	Mindfulness	4			1	1	1	1	8
3	Wisdom			1	1	1	1	1	5
4	Concentration				1	1	1	1	4
5	Faith				1	1			2
6	Intention							1	1
7	Tranquillity						1		1
8	Rapture						1		1
9	Equanimity						1		1
10	Desire			1					1
11	Mind			1					1
12	Right speech							1	1
13	Right action							1	1
14	Right livelihood							1	1

From this we can see that four factors permeate the practice in a variety of guises: energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. These factors, it must be noted, are not different from men-

tal qualities that arise periodically in the ordinary, undeveloped mind. In the untrained mind, however, their occurrence is sporadic and random. The intention behind the Buddha's presentation of the practice is to train the disciple to arouse these factors deliberately, through the exercise of the will, and then to strengthen them and unify their functions so that they can work together as members of an indomitable team. Hence the stress laid, over and over, on the idea that one "develops and cultivates" (*bhāveti bahulikaroti*) the aids to enlightenment. When they are developed and cultivated in unison, under the dominion of an overarching purpose, their inherent potentials can be actualized and gradually raised to the pitch of intensity needed to snap the fetters that, since beginningless time, have kept us in bondage to suffering.

When the factors in the seven sets are said to be "aids to enlightenment" (or, literally, "states on the side of enlightenment"), this raises the question of their relationship to the experience of enlightenment itself. In the Nikāyas the word enlightenment (*bodhi*, *sambodhi*) seems always to be used to denote the cognition issuing directly in arahantship, hence as equivalent to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). In these oldest sources, the thirty-seven factors constitute the practice leading to enlightenment. When they are fulfilled, enlightenment naturally follows.

The Pāli commentaries, however, offer a more complex answer to our question, based on the more minute and technical analysis of experience undertaken in the Abhidhamma treatises. Their more recent provenance should not be a reason for rejecting them out of hand, for the Abhidhamma and the commentaries often make explicit principles derivable from the older texts but not yet worked out in them. The commentaries understand enlightenment as consisting in four discrete momentary attainments, called the four supramundane paths (*lokuttaramagga*), each of which eliminates or attenuates a particular group of defilements and is followed immediately by its fruit (*phala*). Attainment of the path and fruit transforms the disciple into a "noble person" (*ariyapuggala*) at the corresponding level of sanctity: a stream-enterer, a once-returned, a nonreturner, or an arahant. The path of stream-entry eradicates the lowest three fetters—identity view, doubt, and wrong grasp of rules and vows; the path of

once-returning does not eradicate any fetters but attenuates lust, hatred, and delusion; the path of nonreturning eradicates sensual desire and ill will; and the path of arahantship eradicates the five higher fetters—lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. The alignment of stages of liberation with the elimination of defilements is already found in the Nikāyas. What is innovative in the Abhidhamma is the conception of the supramundane path as a momentary breakthrough, though even this can claim precedents in the canon (see just below).

On the basis of this picture of the spiritual path, the commentaries hold that the development of the aids to enlightenment takes place in two stages or at two levels. The first is called the preliminary portion of practice (*pubbabhāga-paṭipadā*), during which the practitioner develops and cultivates the aids to enlightenment for the purpose of attaining the supramundane path (see *Vism* 679–80; Ppn 22:39–40). The virtuous worldling does so with the aim of reaching the path of stream-entry; those established in the lower three fruits do so with the aim of reaching the next higher path. In the preliminary portion of practice the aids to enlightenment are developed because *they lead to enlightenment*. And while a number of factors will naturally occur simultaneously, some degree of progression will be inevitable as more powerful and deeper forces gradually gain ascendancy. With the arising of the supramundane path, however, all thirty-seven aids to enlightenment occur simultaneously. At this point the thirty-seven factors no longer lead to enlightenment. Rather, *they are enlightenment*; they constitute the constellation of mental factors, raised to supramundane stature, that make the cognitive event in which they occur a distinctive experience of awakening (see *Vism* 670; Ppn 21:130–33; and *Vism* 679–80; Ppn 22:39–40). Refined and strengthened by the power of prior development, they collectively contribute to the total experience by which the aspirant attains freedom from suffering. In terms of a classical paradigm, they each participate in the process of fully understanding the noble truth of suffering; of abandoning craving, the cause of suffering; of realizing Nibbāna, the cessation of suffering; and of developing the path, the way to the cessation of suffering.

In the *Mahāvagga* itself the idea of a supramundane path, understood as a momentary peak experience, is not explicit, though precedents for this idea may be located in the canonical

model of the breakthrough to the Dhamma (i.e., the attainment of stream-entry; see 22:83, 90; 35:74, 46:30, etc.) and the liberation from the taints (i.e., the attainment of arahantship; see 15:13; 22:59; 35:28, 75, 121) as sudden transformative events that usually follow a period of prior gradual preparation. But whether or not the notion of a momentary path attainment has a basis in the suttas, the Mahāvagga (read in conjunction with other parts of the Nikāyas) implies that the path has a dual character. The first phase is the practice taken up by one who is technically still a worldlyling (*puthujjana*) training to make the breakthrough to the Dhamma. Such a person will develop the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment for the purpose of making the breakthrough. At a certain point, when the practice has ripened, this person will enter upon “the fixed course of rightness” (*sammatta-niyāma*), either as a faith-follower or a Dhamma-follower (see 25:1). At this point the attainment of stream-entry is certain within that life itself. Now the thirty-seven factors acquire a truly transcendental dimension, since they are “pregnant” with the realization of Nibbāna and will give birth to this realization when the due time arrives. As the practitioner continues to “develop and cultivate” them, even over several more lifetimes, the various defilements are eliminated and the path yields the successive fruits of the holy life, culminating in true knowledge and liberation (*vijjāvimutti*), which marks the end of the journey.

In the Mahāvagga, as I said earlier, the seven sets appear in a different order from the simple numerical one in which they are usually presented. The chapter on the Noble Eightfold Path was probably placed first for the sake of emphasis: to show this most ancient formulation of the practice as the quintessential expression of the Buddha’s way to liberation. The seven factors of enlightenment may have been placed next, again out of turn, because they have the widest compass after the eightfold path. The arrangement of the following chapters does not appear to conform to a deliberate pattern. The Anuruddhasaṃyutta seems to be an appendix to the Satipaṭṭhānasāyutta and may have evolved from that collection. The last four chapters of the Mahāvagga do not deal explicitly with topics that fall under the seven sets, but even these tie up with them, as we shall see below when we examine the individual chapters.

In the General Introduction I discussed the use of templates to generate suttas that cut across the different saṃyuttas, arranging their subject matter into distinctive and revealing patterns. In the Mahāvagga a new cluster of templates appears, apart from the “repetition series,” which I will touch on in the survey of the Maggasāyutta. The allotment of templates to subjects is as follows (see Concordance 3 for sutta references):

Several practices “lead to going beyond from the near shore to the far shore”: said of the eightfold path, the enlightenment factors, the establishments of mindfulness, and the bases for spiritual power.

“Those who have neglected them have neglected the noble path leading to the complete destruction of suffering, while those who have undertaken them have undertaken the noble path”: said of the same four groups.

“They are noble and emancipating and lead to the complete destruction of suffering”: said of the enlightenment factors, the establishments of mindfulness, and the bases for spiritual power—but not of the eightfold path.

“They lead to utter revulsion, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, and Nibbāna”: again, said of the same three groups.

“They do not arise, developed and cultivated, apart from the appearance of a Buddha or outside his Discipline”: said of the eightfold path, the enlightenment factors, and the faculties.

“They yield one of two fruits, final knowledge (i.e., arahantship) or nonreturning”: said of the enlightenment factors, the establishments of mindfulness, the faculties, the bases for spiritual power, and mindfulness of breathing.

“They yield seven fruits and benefits” (obtained by a finer differentiation of the above two fruits): said of the enlightenment factors, the faculties, the bases for spiritual power, and mindfulness of breathing—but not of the establishments of mindfulness.

It is a matter for conjecture why some templates are applied to certain sets of practices but not to others. However, as all the

above templates seem fully applicable to all the sets, this may be due to sheer chance (or to the loss of certain suttas in the line of transmission) and not to a policy of deliberate exclusion.

#### 45. *Maggasaṃyutta*

The best known of the seven sets is, of course, the Noble Eightfold Path, announced already by the Buddha in his first sermon at Bārāṇasī and repeatedly referred to throughout his discourses. The Noble Eightfold Path is given such prominence not only because it has an honoured place as the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, and is thus comprised within the chief doctrine of early Buddhism, but because it is the most comprehensive of the seven sets. Its eight factors have a wider scope than the others, making the practice of the Dhamma a complete way of life. The eightfold path spans the three trainings in virtue, concentration, and wisdom; it guides action of body, speech, and mind; and it transforms our ordinary conduct, thought, and view into the conduct, thought, and view of the noble ones. The other sets, though oriented towards the same goal, are more restricted in scope, pertaining almost exclusively to the meditative phase of the eightfold path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is also the most inclusive in relation to the other six sets, capable of accommodating within itself most, though not all, of their components. Thus right view, as a synonym for wisdom, includes the basis for spiritual power headed by investigation; the faculty and power of wisdom; and the enlightenment factor of discrimination of states. Right effort includes the four right strivings; the basis for spiritual power headed by energy; the faculty, power, and enlightenment factor of energy. Right mindfulness includes the four establishments of mindfulness, and the faculty, power, and enlightenment factor of mindfulness. Right concentration explicitly includes the faculty, power, and enlightenment factor of concentration, and implicitly all four bases for spiritual power. Thus, when the other six sets are correlated with the Noble Eightfold Path, we can see that of their twenty-nine constituents, twenty-four have counterparts among the path factors.

The eightfold path is described by the Buddha as *ariya*, noble, and this qualification is important. It would be too restrictive to

maintain, as some interpreters of early Buddhism have done, that the eightfold path can be practised only by those who are technically *ariyapuggalas*, noble individuals beginning with the faith-follower (*saddhānusāri*). Certainly the Buddha offered the eightfold path to all his disciples who aspired to release from the suffering of *saṃsāra*, and for this reason he called it the way leading to the cessation of suffering. We might understand the adjective *ariya* in a broader sense as indicating not only that this is the path followed by the ariyans, but also that this is the path to be practised to arrive at the ariyan state, the state of inward spiritual nobility. To reach the truly ariyan Noble Eightfold Path that leads infallibly to Nibbāna, one has to start somewhere, and the most reasonable place to start is with the development of the eight path factors in their humbler, more immediately accessible manifestations.

The eight path factors are formally defined at 45:8, using stock definitions found elsewhere in the Pāli Canon (e.g., at DN II 311 and MN III 251–52). But these definitions scarcely indicate how the path is to be developed as a whole. On this question we do not find detailed instructions made explicit anywhere in the *Mahāvagga*, and thus a “how-to manual” of the practice has to be pieced together from various sources. We can start with the Buddha’s statement that each path factor emerges from its predecessor (45:1) and use this as a key for sketching a picture of how the path unfolds in actual experience. On gaining faith in the Buddha in his role as the Tathāgata, the supreme guide to deliverance, the disciple must first arrive at a clear conceptual understanding of the teaching, particularly with respect to the principle of kamma and its fruit and the Four Noble Truths. This is *right view* (*sammāditthi*) in its embryonic stage. Right view alters the disciple’s motives and purposes, steering him or her away from sensuality, ill will, and cruelty, towards renunciation, benevolence, and compassion: this is *right intention* (*sammāsaṅkappa*). Guided by right intention, the disciple undertakes the three ethical factors of the path: *right speech*, *right action*, and *right livelihood* (*sammāvācā*, *sammākammanta*, *sammā-ājīva*). Standing on this foundation of virtue (see 45:149), the disciple trains the mind by diligently and energetically developing the four establishments of mindfulness: this is *right effort* (*sammāvāyāma*) applied to the practice of *right mindfulness* (*sammāsati*). When the effort bears



fruit, the disciple enters and dwells in the four jhānas (or, according to the commentaries, a lower degree of concentration bordering on the first jhāna): this is *right concentration (sammāsamādhi)*.

Right concentration, however, is not the end of the path. Now the disciple must use the concentrated mind to explore the nature of experience. Again, the method is right mindfulness, but this time with emphasis on the fourth establishment, mindful contemplation of phenomena. The disciple contemplates the phenomena comprised in the five aggregates and the six sense bases to discern their marks of impermanence, suffering, and nonself. This is right view at a higher plane, the plane of insight (*vipassanā*). At a certain point in the course of contemplation, when insight becomes sharp and penetrative, the disciple enters upon the fixed course of rightness (*sammatta-niyāma*), the supramundane path, either as a faith-follower or a Dhamma-follower, and thereby becomes bound to win the fruit of stream-entry within this life itself. Now he or she is described as one practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanna*). When the practice of the path is fully ripe, all eight factors converge and join forces, setting off the "breakthrough to the Dhamma" by which the disciple directly sees the Four Noble Truths and cuts off the three lower fetters.

Now the disciple has truly plunged into the stream of the Dhamma, the transcendental eightfold path, which will bear him or her onwards towards the great ocean of Nibbāna. But the disciple must continue to cultivate the eight path factors until the remaining fetters are eradicated and the underlying tendencies uprooted. This occurs in the three successive stages of once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), nonreturner (*anāgāmi*), and arahantship, each with its twin phases of path and fruition. With the attainment of arahantship, the development of the path comes to an end. The arahant remains endowed with the eight qualities that constitute the path, completed by right knowledge and right liberation (see the person "better than the superior person," 45:26), but for the arahant there is nothing further to develop, for the aim of developing the path has been reached.

It is within the process of perfecting the path that all the other aids to enlightenment are simultaneously perfected. Thus we can describe the way to deliverance alternatively as the development of the Noble Eightfold Path, or of the seven factors of enlighten-

ment, or of the four establishments of mindfulness. Each one implicitly contains the others, and thus selecting one system as a basis for practice naturally brings the others to completion.

Because of its liberal use of repetition series, the exact structure of the *Maggasaṃyutta* is hard to discern, and even different Oriental editions divide the chapter up in different ways. There is general agreement that the total number of suttas is 180; the problem concerns the arrangement of the later vaggas. The first five vaggas, with forty-eight suttas, are simple enough. These vaggas extol the Noble Eightfold Path as the supreme expression of the way to Nibbāna, the removal and destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion. The eightfold path is the holy life in its broadest extent (45:6, 19, 20), a holy life which yields the four fruits of liberation and culminates in the destruction of the three root defilements (45:39–40). The path is also the essence of asceticism and brahminhood (45:35–38), and thus by implication the way that all genuine ascetics and brahmins should be following. But the path is not exclusively for renunciants. It can be commended to both laypersons and monastics, for what matters is not the outward way of life but engagement in the right practice (45:23–24). These suttas also stress the importance of good friendship for following the eightfold path, giving a communal dimension to spiritual practice. Indeed, in one text the Buddha declares that good friendship is the entire holy life (45:2). Vagga V enumerates the purposes for which the holy life is lived under the Blessed One—the fading away of lust, the abandoning of the fetters, etc.—and in each case the Noble Eightfold Path is prescribed as the means for fulfilling that purpose.

With vagga VI the *peyyāla* or repetition series begin. The first three vaggas of this type mention seven prerequisites and aids for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path, presumably in its transcendental dimension. The seven conditions are: (1) good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*); (2) virtue (*sīla*); (3) desire (*chanda*), wholesome desire for the goal; (4) self (*attā*), perhaps meaning self-possession; (5) view (*diṭṭhi*), the conceptual right view of kamma and its fruit and of the Four Noble Truths; (6) diligence (*appamāda*), heedfulness in the practice; and (7) careful attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), thorough consideration of things in ways conducive to spiritual growth. Elsewhere the Buddha singles out

good friendship as the chief external aid in the practice of his teaching, with careful attention as the chief internal aid (see 46:48, 49).

The seven conditions are presented under three different aspects, each of which features in one of the three vaggas: as the "forerunner and precursor" for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path; as the "one thing very helpful" for the arising and fulfilment of the path; and as the "one thing that is most effective" for the arising of the path. Each vagma runs through the seven conditions twice, according to two different descriptions of the eight path factors. The first of these characterizes each path factor as "based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release," the second as having "as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, the removal of delusion." The significance of these epithets is explained by the commentary (see V, nn. 7, 15).

Next come four repetition series rooted in a simile comparing the orientation of the path towards Nibbāna to the sloping of India's five great rivers first towards the east, and then (what amounts to the same thing) towards the ocean. As the five rivers are treated first individually and then collectively, each half-vagma contains six suttas, for a total of twelve. Each string of twelve suttas is expounded in four versions, but rather than subsume the different versions under one vagma (as was done in vaggas VI, VII, and VIII), the text makes each version a vagma in its own right, so that the four versions extend over vaggas IX–XII. The two new versions, in vaggas XI and XII, respectively describe each path factor as "having the Deathless as its ground, destination, and final goal," and as "slanting, sloping, and inclining towards Nibbāna."

In vaggas XIII and XIV, the method of assignment is inverted. In these two vaggas, with twenty-two suttas between them, the same four versions are used, but now the sutta is taken as the unit of enumeration and the four versions are incorporated within each sutta, without separate numbering. The suttas bring forth a dazzling series of similes, and the effect of reading them all at a single sitting can be exhilarating, like watching the waves of the ocean break upon the shore on a full-moon night.

The last two vaggas, XV and XVI, list various groups of defilements (such as the *āsavas* or taints) and aspects of existence (such

as the three *bhavas* or types of existence). Of each group it is said that the Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for four purposes: for direct knowledge of it (*abhiññā*), for full understanding of it (*pariññā*), for its utter destruction (*parikkhaya*), and for its abandonment (*pahāna*). Taken together, these two vaggas show unambiguously that the Noble Eightfold Path is aimed at the destruction of suffering and its causes. The fourfold treatment is given in full only for 45:161, but it can be applied to the subject of every sutta, of which there are twenty, ten per vagma. If each mode of treatment were to be counted as a separate sutta, the number of suttas in the two vaggas would be increased fourfold, and with four different versions taken into account, sixteenfold.

#### 46. *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta*

The word *bojjhaṅga* is a compound of *bodhi*, enlightenment, and *aṅga*, limb or factor. The commentaries tend to interpret the word on the analogy of *jhānaṅga*, the *jhāna* factors, taking it to mean the factors constitutive of enlightenment. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka this interpretation becomes so prominent that in texts applying the strict Abhidhamma method (as opposed to those making use of the Suttanta method) the *bojjhaṅgas* are assigned only to supramundane states of consciousness, those pertaining to the paths of liberation, not to wholesome states of mundane consciousness. In the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta*, however, the factors of enlightenment are given this designation primarily because they lead to enlightenment (46:5, 21). They are thus the constellation of mental factors that function as causes and conditions for arriving at enlightenment, the liberating knowledge and vision (46:56).

The seven factors of enlightenment are, for a Buddha, like the seven precious gems of a wheel-turning monarch (46:42). The factors initially emerge in sequence, with each serving as the condition for the next (46:3). They arise within the practice of the last three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, guided by right view; but they represent this segment of the path in finer detail, with recognition of the contrasting qualities that must be brought into delicate balance for the path to yield its fruits. First one attends mindfully to an object of meditation, generally selected from among the four objective bases of mindfulness (body, feelings, mind, phenomena): this is the enlightenment factor of mindful-

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ness (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*). As mindfulness becomes steady, one learns to discern the object's features more clearly, and can also distinguish between the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind that arise within the process of contemplation: the enlightenment factor of discrimination of states (*dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*). This fires one's efforts: the enlightenment factor of energy (*virīya-sambojjhaṅga*). From energy applied to the work of mental purification joy arises and escalates: the enlightenment factor of rapture (*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*). With the refinement of rapture the body and mind calm down: the enlightenment factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*). The tranquil mind is easily unified: the enlightenment factor of concentration (*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*). One looks on evenly at the concentrated mind: the enlightenment factor of equanimity (*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*). As each subsequent factor arises, those already arisen do not disappear but remain alongside it as its adjuncts (though rapture inevitably subsides as concentration deepens). Thus, at the mature stage of development, all seven factors are present simultaneously, each making its own distinctive contribution.

The suttas of the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta* commonly describe the enlightenment factors by the stock formula "based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release." Since in the *Nikāyas*, outside the *Mahāvagga*, this phrase occurs only in apposition to the enlightenment factors, it is possible this was its original provenance and its application to the other sets among the aids to enlightenment is derivative. As the commentarial explanation of the terms suggests, this description best fits the *bojjhaṅgas* only in the advanced stages of insight and at the level of the supramundane path, when the *bojjhaṅgas* are actively eliminating the defilements and leaning towards the realization of *Nibbāna*. It is only then that they can actually be described as leading to enlightenment. Earlier their function is merely preparatory.

The supramundane dimension of the *bojjhaṅgas* seems to be signalled by a phrase occasionally appended to the familiar formula: "vast, exalted, measureless, without ill will" (*vipulaṃ mahaggataṃ appamānaṃ abyāpajjhaṃ*). So described, the enlightenment factors are said to enable a bhikkhu to abandon craving (46:26) and to penetrate and sunder the mass of greed, hatred, and delusion not penetrated before (46:28). With the break-

through to the Dhamma the *bojjhaṅgas* become inalienable possessions, and the noble disciple who has acquired them has "obtained the path" (*maggo paṭiladdho*) that leads infallibly to liberation from the taints (46:30). It is significant that in this passage the seven enlightenment factors assume the function usually ascribed to the Noble Eightfold Path. Even arahants continue to arouse the *bojjhaṅgas*, not for some ulterior goal, but simply as a way of noble dwelling in the present (46:4).

The seven enlightenment factors fall into two classes, the activating and the restraining. The former arise first: discrimination of states, energy, and rapture. The latter emerge later: tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. The activating factors are to be cultivated when the mind is sluggish, as one feeds a small fire with fuel to make it blaze up. The restraining factors are to be cultivated when the mind is excited, as one sprinkles a bonfire with water and wet grass to reduce it. Mindfulness does not belong to either class, for it is useful everywhere, particularly in ensuring that the activating and restraining factors are kept in balance (46:53).

Repeatedly, the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta* establishes an antithesis between the seven enlightenment factors and the five hindrances (*pañca nivarāṇa*): sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. The latter are the main obstacles to meditative progress in both concentration and insight. The abandoning of the hindrances is often described in the texts on the disciple's gradual training (e.g., at DN I 71-73 and MN I 181). Here the five hindrances are called obstructions of the mind that weaken wisdom, while the enlightenment factors are assets that lead to true knowledge and liberation (46:37). The hindrances are comparable to corruptions of gold, to parasitic forest trees, to impurities in water which obscure the reflection of one's face (46:33, 39, 55). They are makers of blindness, destructive to wisdom, distractions from the path to *Nibbāna*; the enlightenment factors are makers of vision and knowledge, promoters of wisdom, aids along the path to *Nibbāna* (46:40, 56).

In the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta* the Buddha describes in detail the conditions responsible for the arising and growth of both the hindrances and the enlightenment factors. He thereby shows how the general principle of conditionality can also be applied to the specific psychological causes of bondage and liberation. The con-

ditions of both sorts are spoken of as nutriments (*āhāra*), a word which underlines the gradual, assimilative aspect of conditionality in relation to mental degeneration and development. At 46:2 the role of the nutriments in relation to the hindrances and enlightenment factors is compared to the sustenance of the body. Here only the active side of nutrition is in evidence. A later sutta (46:51) goes further and shows as well the "denourishment" of the hindrances and enlightenment factors, that is, the measures that prevent them from arising and developing. Prominent among the nutriments for all five hindrances is careless attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), and prominent among the nutriments for all seven enlightenment factors is careful attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). The role of attention in relation to the hindrances and enlightenment factors is also emphasized at 46:23, 24, and 35.

While the Bojjhaṅgasamyutta does not include parallels to the vaggas of the Maggasamyutta that identify the conditions for the path, we can put together a picture of the conditions for the enlightenment factors by collating suttas scattered across this collection. Careful attention is the forerunner of the enlightenment factors and also the chief internal condition for their arising (46:13, 49). But good friendship is equally efficacious as a forerunner and is the chief external condition for their arising (46:48, 50). Other conditions mentioned are virtue (46:11) and diligence (46:31). In a discussion with a wanderer, the Buddha holds up true knowledge and liberation as the goal of the holy life. This is achieved by developing the seven enlightenment factors, which are in turn fulfilled by the four establishments of mindfulness, which depend on the three kinds of good conduct (of body, speech, and mind), which in turn depend on sense restraint (46:6). Thus we see traces here of another version of "transcendental dependent origination" running parallel to the series described at 12:23.

Two suttas show eminent monks recovering from illness when the Buddha recites the enlightenment factors in their presence, and a third shows the Buddha himself recovering when a monk recites them to him (46:14-16). Thus these suttas seem to ascribe a mystical healing power to the recitation of the enlightenment factors. Of course, the healing power does not reside in the words of the text alone, but requires the concentrated attention of the listener. In Sri Lanka these three suttas are included in the *Maha*

*Pirit Pota*, "The Great Book of Protection," a collection of *paritta* or protective discourses, and monks commonly recite them to patients afflicted with serious illness.

In 46:54, the Buddha links the development of the enlightenment factors to the four divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*): boundless lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity. Although the text says that the bhikkhu develops the factors of enlightenment *accompanied by lovingkindness (mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti)*, etc., the commentary explains that one actually uses the divine abodes to develop concentration, and then, *based on this concentration*, one develops the seven enlightenment factors in the mode of insight. In view of the fact that the divine abodes and enlightenment factors, taken in themselves, have different orientations, this explanation sounds reasonable. The text further states that accomplishment in this practice of combining the divine abodes and the enlightenment factors enables the meditator to exercise a fivefold mastery over perception, the ability to alter one's perceptual framework by a simple act of will.

Vaggas VII and VIII continue to connect the development of the seven enlightenment factors with other meditation subjects, detailing six benefits in each case. Possibly the seven benefits mentioned at 46:3 should also be inserted here. Among the meditation subjects, in vagga VII the first five are cemetery contemplations, then come the four divine abodes and mindfulness of breathing; in vagga VIII, we find ten kinds of perception pertaining both to serenity and insight.

Finally, vaggas IX-XVIII elaborate the repetition series by way of the enlightenment factors, but this time they are reduced to little more than mnemonic verses. Two versions are recorded in full, though abridged in form: the "based upon seclusion" version and the "removal of lust" version. But the last sutta (46:184) adds the key phrases of the third and fourth versions (those with "having the Deathless as ground" and "slants towards Nibbāna" as their refrains). This inconspicuous addition implies that the whole series should be run through twice more, in these two versions, a task which the assiduous student would no doubt take up with relish.

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47. *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta*

The phrase *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā* is commonly translated “the four foundations of mindfulness,” a rendering which takes the compound to represent *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* and emphasizes the objective bases of the practice: the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. It seems more likely, however, that *satipaṭṭhāna* should actually be resolved into *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna*, and thus translated “the establishment of mindfulness.” Such an interpretation, which puts the spotlight on the subjective qualities marshalled in the development of mindfulness, is implied by the adjective *upaṭṭhitasati* used to describe one who has set up mindfulness (see V, n. 122 for other reasons). Occasionally in the texts the objective bases of mindfulness are doubtlessly intended as the meaning of *sati-paṭṭhāna*, as at 47:42, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Within the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta* we do not find a detailed explanation of the fourfold contemplation undertaken in this practice. For that we have to turn to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in either of its two versions, the longer one at DN No. 22 or the middle-length one at MN No. 10 (which differs only in lacking the detailed analysis of the Four Noble Truths). The sutta explains contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) in terms of fourteen exercises: mindfulness of breathing, attention to the postures, mindfulness and clear comprehension in all activities, investigation of the thirty-one parts of the body (as illustrative of foulness; see 51:20), analysis into the four elements, and nine cemetery contemplations. Contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) is singlefold but considers feelings in terms of their affective quality—as either pleasant, painful, or neutral—with each being viewed again as either carnal or spiritual. Contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*) is also singlefold but examines sixteen states of mind coloured by their concomitants (as in 51:11). Contemplation of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*) is the most diversified exercise. The exact meaning of *dhammā* here has been subject to dispute. The word is often rendered “mind-objects” or “mental objects,” as if it denoted the sixth external sense base, but this seems too narrow and specific. More likely *dhammā* here signifies all phenomena, which for purposes of insight are grouped into fixed modes of classification determined by the Dhamma itself—the doctrine or teaching—and culminating in the realization of

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the ultimate Dhamma comprised within the Four Noble Truths. There are five such schemes: the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six pairs of internal and external sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths.

The importance of *satipaṭṭhāna* is emphasized in the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta* right from the start by describing it as the *ekāyana magga* for the overcoming of suffering and the realization of Nibbāna (47:1). Though the Pāli expression is often rendered “the sole way” or “the only way,” this translation has little support either from the suttas or the commentaries. The probable meaning, derived from its usage in a non-doctrinal context, is “the one-way path,” so called because it goes in one direction: towards the purification of beings, freedom from suffering, and the realization of Nibbāna. The Buddha is shown reflecting on the four *satipaṭṭhānas* as “the one-way path” soon after his enlightenment, and Brahmā Sahampati appears before him and sings its praises in verse (47:18, 43).

The Buddha recommends the four *satipaṭṭhānas* to novices, trainees, and even arahants, each for a different purpose. Novices are to practise them to know body, feelings, mind, and phenomena as they really are, that is, to arouse the insight needed to reach the transcendental path. Trainees, who have attained the path, are to practise them to fully understand these things and thereby reach arahantship. Arahants practise them detached from body, feelings, mind, and phenomena (47:4). The four *satipaṭṭhānas* are the proper resort and domain of a bhikkhu. Those bhikkhus who stray from them into the “cords of sensual pleasure” become vulnerable to Māra; those who remain within them are inaccessible to the Evil One (47:6, 7).

To emphasize further the importance of *satipaṭṭhāna*, three suttas connect the practice with the longevity of the Buddha’s dispensation (47:22, 23, 25). Towards the end of his life, when his health was failing, the Buddha instructed the bhikkhus to dwell “with yourselves as your own island, with yourselves as your own refuge.” The way this is to be done, he explained, is by developing the four establishments of mindfulness (47:9). He gave the Saṅgha the same advice after the deaths of Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna (47:13, 14), which must have been stirring reminders for all of the law of impermanence.

The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* centres upon the cultivation of *sati*,

mindfulness, which may be understood as focused awareness applied to immediate experience in both its subjective and objective sectors. The heart of the practice is succinctly stated in the formula found in almost every sutta in this chapter. The formula shows that the exercise of *sati* has a reflexive character: one is to contemplate the body *in the body*, feelings *in feelings*, mind *in mind*, phenomena *in phenomena*. The reiteration signals that the contemplative act must isolate each domain of mindfulness from the others and attend to it as it is in itself. This means the given object has to be laid bare, stripped of the layers of mental proliferation which usually clutter our perception and prevent us from seeing the true characteristics of phenomena. The meditator must see the body in the act of breathing as simply a breathing body, not a person or self who is breathing; feelings as simply feelings, not as episodes in a long biography; states of mind as simply states of mind, not as scenes in a personal drama; phenomena as mere phenomena, not as personal achievements or liabilities.

The full formula makes it clear that mindfulness does not work alone but in company. The term "ardent" (*ātāpi*) implies energy, "clearly comprehending" (*sampajāno*) implies incipient wisdom, and the occasional addition, "concentrated, with one-pointed mind (*samāhitā ekaggacittā*)" (47:4), points to the presence of concentration. Thus the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* spreads over the last three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. And since virtue and straightened view are said to be its prerequisites (47:3, 15), the former comprising the three ethical path factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood, and the latter synonymous with right view, this implies that the development of the entire Noble Eightfold Path can be encapsulated within the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. This much is suggested when the eightfold path is called "the way leading to the development of the establishments of mindfulness" (47:30).

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* each exercise in mindfulness is followed by two further extensions of the practice, expressed in two paragraphs attached to the basic instructions. These are also found in the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta*, though mentioned separately. Thus at 47:3 the Buddha instructs a bhikkhu to contemplate each base of mindfulness "internally" (i.e., within himself), and "externally" (i.e., in other people), and then both "internally and externally" (in himself and others in rapid succession). At 47:40

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he explains "the development of the establishment of mindfulness" to mean contemplating each base as having the nature of origination, the nature of vanishing, and the nature of both origination and vanishing. These two extensions deepen and broaden the practice, spreading it outwards from a narrow fixation on one's immediate experience towards a discernment of its wider expanse and intrinsic patterning.

The practice of mindfulness is often coupled with another quality, clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), which is mentioned within the basic formula and also separately. At 47:2 clear comprehension is explained with reference to the bodily postures and routine activities of everyday life, at 47:35 with reference to the arising and passing away of feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. The commentaries explain clear comprehension to have a fourfold application: as full awareness of the purpose of one's actions; as prudence in the choice of means; as engagement of the mind with the meditation subject; and as discernment of things in their true nature, free from delusion.

It is interesting to note that the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta* pits the four establishments of mindfulness against the five hindrances; the hindrances are a "heap of the unwholesome," the *satipaṭṭhānas* a "heap of the wholesome" (47:5). That the five hindrances should be counteracted by both the seven enlightenment factors and the four establishments of mindfulness is perfectly comprehensible when we realize that the first enlightenment factor is mindfulness itself; which is activated by the development of the four establishments of mindfulness. One summary of the practice adopted by all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future describes the path in three steps: the abandoning of the five hindrances, the settling of the mind in the four establishments of mindfulness, and the correct development of the seven enlightenment factors (47:12). The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is precisely the method for abandoning the hindrances, and it is within the womb of this practice, again, that the seven enlightenment factors are conceived and grow towards their immanent aim, true knowledge and liberation (*vijjāvimutti*; see 46:6). Thus, while they claim only one place among the seven sets making up the aids to enlightenment, the four establishments of mindfulness can be seen as the trunk from which all the other sets branch out and bring forth their fruits.

Lest engagement in mindfulness meditation be branded a narcissistic indulgence, the Buddha makes it clear that it is by protecting oneself through the development of mindfulness that one can most effectively protect others. Conversely, the practice of introspective meditation must be balanced by the cultivation of such social virtues as patience, harmlessness, lovingkindness, and sympathy (47:19). The Buddha also urges his disciples to share the benefits of their practice with others by establishing their relatives, friends, and colleagues in the fourfold development of mindfulness (47:48). The Master especially commends this practice to the sick, probably because mindfulness and clear comprehension directed to body, feelings, mind, and phenomena are the best aids in dealing with the bodily affliction, physical pain, and mental distress brought on by illness.

At the end of the *saṃyutta* come the inevitable repetition series. Since the four establishments of mindfulness are accompanied by their own formula—"he dwells contemplating the body in the body," etc.—there is only one version of each sutta, stated by way of this formula. These again, with the exception of the first and last suttas, are reduced to mnemonic verses.

#### 48. *Indriyasamṃyutta*

Unlike the preceding *saṃyuttas*, the *Indriyasamṃyutta* is made up of heterogeneous material. It deals not only with the five spiritual faculties, a set included among the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, but also with a variety of other items united under the rubric *indriya*. Possibly the most ancient recension of this *saṃyutta* consisted solely of texts centred around the spiritual faculties, but since the word *indriya* has a wider compass, at some point the compilers of the canon may have felt obliged to include in this collection texts concerned with the other types of faculties. This hypothesis, though unverifiable, may account for the somewhat haphazard organization of this *saṃyutta*.

By the early Abhidhamma period the Buddhist doctrinal specialists had drawn up a list of twenty-two faculties proposed as a compendium of phenomenological categories on a par with the five aggregates, twelve sense bases, and eighteen elements. As such, the faculties are collected and analysed in the *Vibhaṅga* of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (chap. 5). Significantly, even though all

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the faculties were drawn from the suttas, the *Indriyavibhaṅga* has only an Abhidhamma analysis, not a Suttanta analysis, implying that the ancient compilers of the *Vibhaṅga* did not consider the complete assemblage of faculties to constitute a unified scheme within the framework of the Sutta Piṭaka.

The twenty-two *indriyas* fall into five distinct groups as follows:

- five spiritual faculties
- six sense faculties
- five affective faculties
- three faculties related to final knowledge
- a triad made up of the femininity faculty, the masculinity faculty, and the life faculty.

All these faculties, treated at least briefly in the *Indriyasamṃyutta*, are called *indriyas* in the sense that they exercise dominion in a particular sphere of activity or experience, just as Indra (after whom they are named) exercises dominion over the devas.

The *saṃyutta* begins with two vaggas devoted to the five spiritual faculties, the faculties of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The opening suttas treat these faculties by way of templates we have met several times already: the gratification triad, the origin pentad, and the ascetics and brahmins templates. In the second ascetics and brahmins sutta we find the spiritual faculties assigned to the place occupied by suffering in the pattern of the Four Noble Truths. This move initially seems odd, at striking variance with the unqualified accolades accorded to the other sets among the aids to enlightenment. It becomes intelligible when we realize that the faculties are here being considered, not simply as factors conducive to enlightenment, but as members of a broader scheme of phenomenological categories parallel to the aggregates, sense bases, and elements.

Four suttas in the first vagga draw a distinction between the stream-enterer and the arahant. The stream-enterer is defined as one who has understood the faculties by way of the given templates; the arahant, having acquired this knowledge, has developed it to the point where his mind has been freed from clinging (48:2-5; cp. 22:109-10). In 48:8-11 the Buddha explains the domains and practical implementation of the faculties, and then

in 48:12–18 he shows how the relative strength of the faculties determines the gradation among the different classes of noble disciples (48:24, apparently out of place, also belongs to this set).

In the third vāgga we find mention made of the 'trinity triad (48:22) and the final knowledge triad (48:23), but without explanations. Formal definitions are found only in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the commentaries (see V, nn. 205, 206 for the references). In 48:26–30 the focus falls on the six sense faculties, almost identical with the six internal sense bases. These are treated merely by way of the template patterns, with nothing new of special interest.

Vagga IV is devoted to the five affective faculties, finer divisions of the three feelings: the pleasure and joy faculties are respectively bodily and mental pleasant feeling; the pain and displeasure faculties are bodily and mental painful feeling; and the equanimity faculty is neutral feeling (48:36–38). The last sutta in this series deals with the stage at which the faculties completely cease; the text is difficult to interpret without the aid of the commentary (paraphrased in the notes).

In vagga V we return to the spiritual faculties, this time to a phalanx of suttas that shed a brighter light on their place in the Buddhist path. These suttas show that the five faculties constitute a complete structure capable of leading all the way to the destruction of the taints (48:43, end). In 48:50, Sāriputta explains that the faculties unfold in a progressive series, faith leading to the arousal of energy, energy to mindfulness, mindfulness to concentration, and concentration to wisdom. Among the five faculties, wisdom is repeatedly given the highest valuation; it is called the chief among the states conducive to enlightenment and extolled with lovely similes (48:51, 54, 55, 68–70). Indeed, wisdom is said to be the faculty that stabilizes the other four faculties, making them faculties in the proper sense (48:45, 52).

Both the five faculties and the five powers draw upon the same selection of spiritual qualities, and this raises the question of their relationship. It may seem that the faculties represent these five qualities at an earlier phase, and the powers at a later, more advanced phase, but the texts do not countenance this view. The Buddha declares the two sets to be identical, with the designations "faculties" and "powers" being used simply to highlight different aspects of the same set of qualities; they are like the two

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streams of the same river flowing around a midstream island (48:43). The commentary explains that the five factors become faculties when considered as exercising control in their respective domains, and powers when considered as unshaken by their opposites.

One relationship among the faculties, not mentioned in the suttas but discussed in the commentaries, is worth noting. This is their arrangement into mutually complementary pairs. Faith is paired with wisdom, ensuring that the emotional and intellectual sides of the spiritual life are kept in balance; energy is paired with concentration, ensuring that the activating and restraining sides of mental development are kept in balance. Mindfulness belongs to neither side but oversees the others, holding them together in a mutually enriching tension.

The Indriyasamyutta ends with the repetition series, this time in two versions, the "based upon seclusion" version and the "removal of lust" version.

#### 49. *Sammapadhānasamyutta*

#### 50. *Balasaṃyutta*

These two *saṃyuttas* do not contain any original suttas but merely instantiate the repetition series. Since the four right strivings are described by their own stock formula, the repetition series in the *Sammapadhānasamyutta* is stated only once, accompanied by this formula. The five powers are parallel to the five faculties, and therefore the *Balasaṃyutta* is to be elaborated with the repetition series filled out in the two versions.

#### 51. *Iddhipādasamyutta*

The term *iddhipāda*, rendered "basis for spiritual power," is a compound of *iddhi* and *pāda*. *Iddhi* (Skt *ṛddhi*) originally meant success, growth, or prosperity, but early on in the Indian yogic tradition the word had come to mean a special kind of success obtained through meditation, namely, the ability to perform wondrous feats that defy the normal order of events. Such feats, for Indian spirituality, are not to be regarded as miracles proving the divine stature of the person who performs them. They are understood, rather, as extensions of natural causality which



become accessible to the meditator through accomplishment in concentration (*samādhi*). The mind trained in concentration is able to discern subtle interconnections between bands of mental and material energy invisible to ordinary sensory consciousness. Such perception enables the accomplished yogi to tap into the deep undercurrents of natural causality and use them to perform feats which, to the uninitiated, appear mystical or miraculous.

While early Buddhism is often depicted as a rationalistic system of ethics or a path of purely ascetic meditation, the Nikāyas themselves are replete with texts in which the Buddha is shown performing feats of psychic power and extolling disciples who excel in these skills. What the Buddha rejected was not the acquisition of such powers per se but their misuse for irresponsible ends. He prohibited his monks and nuns from displaying these powers to impress the laity and convert unbelievers, and he emphasized that these powers themselves are no proof that their bearer has genuine wisdom. In his system the real miracle was the "miracle of instruction" (*anusāsani-pāṭihāriya*), the ability to transform a person through teachings on how to overcome evil and fulfil the good.

Nevertheless, the Buddha incorporated the *iddhis* into his path of training with an eightfold scheme often encountered in the texts. The scheme is called simply "the various kinds of spiritual power" (*anekavihitaṃ iddhividhaṃ*), and is mentioned close to a dozen times in the present *saṃyutta*; most notably in the formal definition of *iddhi* (at 51:19). He also offers an expanded interpretation of the types of spiritual success obtainable through meditation, one which subsumes the *iddhis* under a broader category of six types of higher knowledge commonly known as the *chaḷabhiññā* or six direct knowledges. These are: the eight kinds of spiritual powers; the divine ear; the ability to know the minds of other beings; the recollection of one's past lives; the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings according to their kamma; and the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (51:11, etc.). The first five are mundane, desirable as ornaments of an accomplished meditator but not essential for liberation (see 12:70). The last is supramundane and the culmination of the step-by-step training. By adopting this wider and more profound conception of spiritual success, the Buddha could include within his system the various spiritual powers esteemed so highly in the

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Indian yogic culture while giving pride of place to the achievement peculiar to his own discipline: the liberation of mind attainable only through the destruction of the defilements.

The four *iddhipādas* are the means to attainment of the spiritual powers, whether of the mundane or the transcendental kind. Thus, though included among the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, this set of factors has a somewhat different flavour than the others. While the others are all expounded solely for the contribution they make to enlightenment and the realization of Nibbāna, the *iddhipādas* can be used to achieve both the wonder-working *iddhis* and the supreme spiritual power of arahantship.

The *Iddhipādasamyutta* sets the *iddhipādas* in a universal context by declaring that all ascetics and brahmins—past, present, and future—who generate spiritual power do so by their means (51:6-7). Again, it is by developing the four *iddhipādas* that all ascetics and brahmins of the three times become mighty and powerful (51:16), or acquire the six direct knowledges (51:17). Indeed, it is by developing the *iddhipādas* that the Buddha has become a Perfectly Enlightened One (51:8).

The four *iddhipādas* are defined by a formula cited in almost every sutta of this collection. The formula can be analysed into three portions, two common to all four bases, the third differentiating them as fourfold. The two common components are concentration (*samādhi*) and "volitional formations of striving" (*padhānasankhārā*). The latter is defined by the formula for the four right strivings (*sammappadhānā*), so that the *iddhipādas*, the third set of the aids to enlightenment, implicitly contain the second set.

The components unique to each *iddhipāda* are the factors that take the lead in generating concentration: desire (*chanda*), energy (*virīya*), mind (*citta*), and investigation (*vimamsā*). The commentary interprets desire here as "desire to act" (*kattukammatā*) and "investigation" (*vimamsā*) as wisdom. Energy and mind are not given any special definitions apart from the general synonyms for these factors. Presumably, while all four qualities coexist in every state of concentration, on any given occasion only one of the four will assume the dominant role in generating concentration and this gives its name to the *iddhipāda*. It is interesting to observe that the formula for right striving, included in the *iddhipāda* formula as noted above, mentions three factors that

function as *iddhipādas*, namely, desire, energy, and mind; and since right striving presupposes discrimination between wholesome and unwholesome states, some degree of investigation is also involved. Thus once again we can see the interwoven character of the seven sets.

The standard formula for the *iddhipādas* is sometimes embedded in a longer, more complex statement which shows that they are to be cultivated in conjunction with a number of other meditative skills necessary to ensure balance, thoroughness, and breadth to their development. The passage is stated baldly at 51:11, as a discovery the Buddha made while still a bodhisatta striving for enlightenment; they recur at 51:12, as describing how a bhikkhu achieves the six direct knowledges. Read alone, the passage is far from self-explanatory, but 51:20 provides an internal commentary on each term, almost in the manner of an Abhidhamma treatise. Another text, recurring five times with variations only in the auditors, gives individual definitions of spiritual power, the bases for spiritual power, the development of the bases for spiritual power, and the way to the development of the bases (51:19, 27–30). The last definition connects the four *iddhipādas* with the Noble Eightfold Path, again drawing our attention to the interdependence of the seven sets.

In sum, the *iddhis* or spiritual powers to be acquired by meditation are: most narrowly, the eight kinds of spiritual powers, wondrous feats of psychic power; more broadly, the six direct knowledges; and consummately, the taintless liberation of mind. The means of achieving these powers, their bases or "feet" (the literal meaning of *pāda*), are the four *iddhipādas*. These employ the four kinds of right striving and a particular dominant mental factor to generate concentration, and this concentration, in conjunction with the effort and the dominant factor, enables the meditator to exercise spiritual powers. To show that while the *iddhipādas* can lead to all three kinds of *iddhi*, the last is sufficient in itself, the suttas sometimes state simply that the four *iddhipādas*, when developed and cultivated, lead to the taintless liberation of mind (51:18, 23).

In several texts, from the *Iddhipādasamyutta* and elsewhere, other marvellous potencies are ascribed to the four *iddhipādas*. One who has mastered them, it is said, can extend his life span even as long as a *kappa*, a term whose meaning here has been a

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subject of controversy but which seems to signify a full cosmic aeon. The Buddha ascribes this ability to himself in the famous dialogue with Ānanda at the Cāpāla Shrine near Vesāli, related in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta and reported here as well (51:11). Sāriputta ascribes the same ability to Moggallāna (at 12:30), who ironically is reported to have been killed by assassins. By developing the *iddhipādas*, Moggallāna can set off a minor earthquake with his toe (51:14), and the Buddha can use his physical body to travel to the brahmā world (51:22). The *saṃyutta* closes with the repetition series, which is run through in one round using the stock description of the *iddhipādas*.

#### 52. *Anuruddhasamyutta*

This *saṃyutta* features the Venerable Anuruddha as an exponent of the four establishments of mindfulness, which figure in every sutta in the chapter. The *saṃyutta* may have originally belonged to the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta*, later to be detached and given independent status. The *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta* preserves three suttas spoken by Anuruddha (47:26–28), which are consonant in character with those found here, and it is unclear why they were not taken out and brought into this collection.

The first sutta of the *Anuruddhasamyutta* is of special interest, for it merges into one complex pattern the two extensions of the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula concerned with insight, one dealing with the contemplation of the four bases as internal and external, the other with contemplation of the four bases as having the nature of origination and vanishing. Also of interest is the long series of texts in the second *vagga* which show Anuruddha claiming it was by the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness that he developed various spiritual powers. Among these are the six direct knowledges (divided into two segments, 52:12–14, 22–24), which are usually ascribed to the practice of the four *iddhipādas*. The assertion that they result from the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* means that the latter method need not be understood as exclusively a system of insight meditation (a widespread view) but can also be seen as a path conducive to the fulfilment of all the *jhānas*. We also find here (at 52:15–24) the ten knowledges elsewhere called the ten powers of the Tathāgata (MN I 69–71). As the tradition regards these as unique endowments of a

Perfectly Enlightened One, the commentary explains that Anuruddha possessed them only in part.

### 53. *Jhānasamyyutta*

This *samyyutta* contains only the standard *jhāna* formula integrated with the repetition series in a single round.

### 54. *Ānāpānasamyyutta*

Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) is generally regarded as the most important meditation subject taught in the *Nikāyas*. The Pāli exegetical tradition holds that it was mindfulness of breathing that the Buddha practised on the night of his enlightenment, prior to attaining the four *jhānas* and the three true knowledges, and during his teaching career he occasionally would go off into seclusion to devote himself to this meditation. He calls it "the Tathāgata's dwelling," a lofty honour, and often recommends it to both trainees and arahants. For those in training it leads to the destruction of the taints; for arahants it leads to a pleasant dwelling here and now and to mindfulness and clear comprehension (54:11).

The practice of mindfulness of breathing is defined by a sixteen-step formula first introduced in 54:1 and repeated throughout the *Ānāpānasamyyutta*. The sixteen steps are not necessarily sequential but to some extent overlap; thus they might be called phases rather than steps. The first four are also mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, in the section on mindfulness of the body, but the sixteenfold formula gives the practice a wider range. The sixteen aspects are divided into four tetrads, each of which is correlated with one of the four establishments of mindfulness. The correlations are first explained in 54:10 and recur in several later suttas.

The first six suttas of the *Ānāpānasamyyutta* are framed in terms simply of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). From 54:7 onwards, a shift takes place, and the suttas are phrased in terms of concentration by mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati-samādhi*). This is the concentration obtained by being mindful of the breath. Here again, as with the path factors, enlightenment factors, and faculties, mindfulness is a condition for concentra-

tion. In 54:8 the Buddha enumerates the benefits that come from concentration gained by mindfulness of breathing: it is physically easeful, removes worldly memories and thoughts, and leads to many exalted attainments including the four *jhānas*, the formless states, the attainment of cessation, and even liberation from the taints. Sutta 54:9 records the curious occasion when a large number of monks, after hearing the Buddha preach on the foulness of the body, committed suicide. Subsequently the Buddha taught the bhikkhus *ānāpānasati-samādhi* as a "peaceful and sublime" dwelling.

The most important sutta in the *Ānāpānasamyyutta* is 54:13, the substance of which is repeated at 54:14–16. Here the Buddha explains how concentration by mindfulness of breathing fulfils the four establishments of mindfulness; these in turn fulfil the seven factors of enlightenment; and these in turn fulfil true knowledge and liberation. This method of exposition shows mindfulness of breathing as a complete subject of meditation that begins with simple attention to the breath and culminates in the highest deliverance of the mind. This theme is reconfirmed by the last string of suttas in the chapter, which declare that concentration by mindfulness of breathing leads to the abandoning of the fetters and the eradication of all defilements (54:17–20).

### 55. *Sotāpattisamyyutta*

This chapter might have been more accurately entitled *Sotāpattiyaṅgasamyyutta*, for it is not concerned with stream-entry in a general way but with a specific group of factors that define a person as a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). The stream (*sota*) is the Noble Eightfold Path, and the stream-enterer is so called because he or she, by directly penetrating the truth of the Dhamma, has become possessed of the eight factors of the path (55:5).

The four qualities that define a person as a stream-enterer are called the four *sotāpattiyaṅga*, factors of stream-entry. The Pāli term is actually used with reference to two different tetrads. The more frequently mentioned tetrad is the set of four qualities possessed by a stream-enterer, and in this context the term is properly rendered "factors of stream-entry," or even "factors of the stream-enterer." But alongside this tetrad we find another one, less often mentioned, consisting of the qualities that must be

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actualized to attain stream-entry. I translate *sotāpattiyaṅga* in this sense as “factors for stream-entry.”

The four factors possessed by the stream-enterer are confirmed confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha (confidence in each being reckoned a separate factor), and “the virtues dear to the noble ones” (*ariyakantāni silāni*). Confirmed confidence (*aveccappasāda*) is faith rooted in personal validation of the truth of the Dhamma. The decisive event that marks the transition from the stage of one “practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry” to that of a full-fledged stream-enterer is the “breakthrough to the Dhamma,” also called the obtaining of the vision of the Dhamma (see 13:1). This consists in the direct seeing of the Four Noble Truths, or (more concisely) of the principle that “whatever has the nature of arising, all that has the nature of cessation.” On seeing the truth of the Dhamma, the disciple eradicates the three lower fetters—identity view, doubt, and distorted grasp of rules and vows—and thus acquires confidence grounded upon this experiential confirmation. Such confidence is placed in the “Three Jewels” of Buddhism: in the Buddha as the supreme teacher of the path to Nibbāna; in the Dhamma as the map and goal of the path; and in the Saṅgha as the community of noble ones who share in the realization of the Dhamma. The attainment of stream-entry also issues in profound reverence for morality, particularly for the basic moral virtues comprised in the five precepts: abstinence from the destruction of life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, and the use of intoxicants.

The stream-enterer is characterized by a stock formula repeated many times in the *Sotāpattisaṃyutta* and elsewhere in the *Nikāyas*. He or she is “no longer bound to the nether world (*avinipātadhamma*),” incapable of taking rebirth in any of the lower realms of existence—the hells, the animal realm, or the domain of ghosts; “fixed in destiny” (*niyata*), bound to reach liberation without regression after seven lives at most, all lived either in the human world or in a celestial realm; and “with enlightenment as destination” (*sambodhiparāyana*), bound to attain full knowledge of the Four Noble Truths culminating in the destruction of the taints.

The Buddha calls the four factors of stream-entry “the mirror of the Dhamma,” for reflection on them can enable the disciple to

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determine whether he or she is a stream-enterer (55:8). He also calls them “streams of merit, streams of the wholesome, nutriments of happiness” (55:31, 41) and “divine tracks of the devas for the purification of beings” (55:34, 35). The four factors of stream-entry lead to a celestial rebirth (55:18, 36), but whether the disciple is reborn in heaven or in the human world, the factors bring long life, beauty, happiness, and dominion (55:30). They also still the fear of death, for a noble disciple who possesses these four factors has escaped the prospect of rebirth into a bad destination (55:14, 15). Thus, when ill, a stream-enterer can be consoled by being reminded that he or she possesses the four factors, as Ānanda comforts the householder Anāthapiṇḍika (55:27). The controversial discourse on *Sarakāni* (in two versions, 55:24, 25) tells the story of a Sakyan noble who had been fond of drinking yet was declared by the Buddha a stream-enterer after his death. When this announcement drew a storm of protest from the Sakyans, the Buddha explained that *Sarakāni* had completed the training before his death and thus had died a stream-enterer.

Several suttas in this *saṃyutta* present alternatives to the fourth item in the list. On two occasions, in place of “the virtues dear to the noble ones,” generosity is cited as the fourth factor of stream-entry (55:6, 39); twice it is cited as the fourth stream of merit (55:32, 42). Two texts cite “wisdom directed to arising and passing away,” i.e., the wisdom of insight into impermanence, as the fourth stream of merit (55:33, 43). Thus, by collating the lists and taking the common core of the first three items to exemplify faith, we arrive at four central qualities of a stream-enterer: faith, virtue, generosity, and wisdom (*saddhā, sila, cāga, paññā*), elsewhere mentioned together as the marks of a *sappurisa*, a superior person.

Possessing the four factors of stream-entry is not the end of the road for the noble disciple, but only a way station towards the final goal. They “lead to the destruction of the taints” (55:38), and one endowed with them “slants, slopes, and inclines to Nibbāna” (55:22). However, though the stream-enterer is bound to win final realization, the Buddha urges such disciples not to become complacent but to hasten their progress by diligence (55:20). To a critically ill youth who has already reached stream-entry, he teaches six contemplations that “partake of true knowledge” by practising which the youth dies as a nonreturner (55:3). He even

instructs one lay follower how to guide another on his deathbed so as to lead him all the way to arahantship (55:54).

The other tetrad consists of the four factors for stream-entry, that is, for attainment of stream-entry. These are: association with superior persons, hearing the true Dhamma, careful attention, and practice in accordance with the Dhamma (55:5, 50). These qualities lead not only to stream-entry but to all the fruits of the path. They also bring to fulfilment the various potentialities of wisdom (55:55–74).

### 56. *Saccasaṃyutta*

The final saṃyutta of the Mahāvagga is devoted to the truths discovered by the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment and placed by him at the core of his teaching. These, of course, are the Four Noble Truths, and thus this chapter on the truths makes a fitting conclusion to the entire Saṃyutta Nikāya. The Four Noble Truths were first announced in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the first discourse at Bārāṇasī. Accordingly we find this sutta in the midst of this collection, tucked away almost inconspicuously (56:11), but with its importance signalled by the applause of the devas resounding throughout the ten thousand-fold world system.

To highlight their significance, the Saccasaṃyutta casts the Four Noble Truths against a universal background. They are not merely particular pronouncements of doctrine peculiar to one historical spiritual teacher known as the Buddha, but the content of realization for all who arrive at liberating truth, whether past, present, or future (56:3, 4). The Buddha is called the Perfectly Enlightened One just because he has awakened to these truths (56:23); even more, all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future become fully enlightened by awakening to these truths (56:24). The truths are described as noble (*ariya*) because they are actual, unerring, not otherwise (56:27), and because they are taught by the supreme noble one, the Buddha (56:28). They might also be called noble because they are the truths understood by the noble ones, from the stream-enterer upwards, and because their realization confers noble stature.

The reason sentient beings roam and wander in saṃsāra is because they have not understood and penetrated the Four

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Noble Truths (56:21). Ignorant of the truths, they go from one existence to the next like a stick thrown into the air, falling now on its tip, now on its butt (56:33). At the base of the causal genesis of suffering is ignorance (*avijjā*), as is shown by the chain of dependent origination, and ignorance consists just in unawareness of the Four Noble Truths (56:17). Its antidote is knowledge (*vijjā*), which accordingly is just knowledge of the four truths (56:18). But the world cannot find the way to liberation on its own. Before the arising of a Buddha the world is enveloped in thick spiritual darkness, as the cosmos is enveloped in physical darkness before the sun and moon are formed. The task of a Buddha is to discover the Four Noble Truths and teach them to the world. His doing so is “the manifestation of great light and radiance” (56:38).

The things the Buddha knows but does not disclose are many, like the leaves in a *siṃsapā* forest; the things he discloses are few, like the leaves in his hand. These few things are all comprised in the Four Noble Truths. They are taught because they are beneficial, pertain to the fundamentals of the holy life, and lead to enlightenment and Nibbāna (56:31). For the same reason the monks are to think thoughts connected with the truths and confine their conversation to talk about the truths (56:8–10).

The first penetration of the Four Noble Truths occurs with the breakthrough to the Dhamma, which marks the attainment of stream-entry. To make this breakthrough is extremely difficult, more so even than piercing with an arrow the tip of a hair split into seven strands (56:45). But this achievement is a matter of the utmost urgency, for without making the breakthrough it is impossible to put an end to suffering (56:44). Hence the Buddha again and again urges his disciples to “arouse extraordinary desire” and “make an extraordinary effort” to make the breakthrough to the truths (56:34).

Once the disciple makes the breakthrough and sees the truths, more work still lies ahead, for each of the truths imposes a task (*kicca*), and after entering the path the disciple must fulfil these tasks in order to win the final fruit. The Buddha discovered these tasks along with his enlightenment and announced them already in the first sermon (56:11). They are also discovered and declared by all Tathāgatas (56:12). The truth of suffering, which ultimately consists of the five aggregates and the six internal sense bases

1958, p. 83–107), a fait l'objet de nombreuses versions chinoises, dont celle de Xuanzang, qui est, de toutes, de très loin la plus connue et qui est utilisée quotidiennement dans les liturgies des sectes Tendai, Shingon et Zen. Ceux qui ont vu le film *Kwaidan* et ceux qui ont lu le conte de Lafcadio Hearn dont il est tiré, se rappelleront peut-être que c'est ce sūtra *Hannya-shingyō* qui, telle une cuirasse rendant invisible, avait été calligraphié sur le corps du musicien Hōichi, sans oublier aucun endroit, sauf—hélas!—les oreilles.

\* \* \*

#### NOTE COMPLEMENTAIRE

A la suite de la publication de cet article, Madame Kuo Liying, chercheur travaillant au Collège de France, a bien voulu me faire savoir qu'elle avait trouvé quelques exemples montrant que la pratique de l'"ouverture de l'oeil" est effectivement attestée dans les sources chinoises.

L'encyclopédie bouddhique *Fayuan zhulin* (jap. *Hōon jurin*), achevée en 668, expose, dans son fascicule C (*Taishō-d.*, LIII, p. 1027 a), que l'empereur Taizong des Tang fit édifier un temple pour la Grande impératrice Mu et que, après l'achèvement de celui-ci, il s'y rendit en personne et marqua (littéralement, "ponctua," chin. *dian*, jap. *ten*) la pupille de l'oeil du Buddha. Une version plus tardive du récit, contenue dans la chronique générale *Fozu tongji* (jap. *Busso tōki*), (1269–1271), fasc. XXXIX (*Taishō-d.*, XLIX, p. 364 b), précise l'année où eut lieu ce rite, 634, et emploie l'expression : "ouvrit lui-même l'oeil du Buddha" (*zi kai fo yan*, jap. *mizukara butsugen wo hiraku*).

Un autre récit contenu dans le *Fozu tongji*, fasc. XXXVI (*Taishō-d.*, loc. cit., p. 340 b), rapporte comment, à une époque bien antérieure, en 363, sous les Jin orientaux, le fameux peintre Gu Kaizhi avait marqué la pupille d'une statue de Vimalakīrti.

D'autre part, ajoute Madame Kuo, dans le taoïsme ainsi que dans la religion populaire chinoise, le rite d'"ouverture" occupe une place assez importante. Le premier ne se contente pas d'une simple "ouverture" des yeux ; cette "ouverture" est pratiquée sur tous les membres du corps de la statue (renvoi à Ōfuchi Jinji, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō giri*, Tokyo, 1983, p. 368–369). Chez les taoïstes d'aujourd'hui, une "ouverture de la lumière" (*kaiguang*) est également faite sur le "corps de l'âme" (*hunshen*) (*ibid.*, p. 566 s.). Pour la religion populaire, voir encore le même ouvrage, p. 1075–1083.

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## Ch'an Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: Preliminary Inferences on the Permutation of Chinese Buddhism

by John R. McRae

### I. The Acquisition of the *Heart Sūtra* by Chinese Buddhists

The *Prajñā-paramitā-hṛdaya* is a Chinese text. True, the words themselves were translated from an Indian original, and there do exist Sanskrit manuscripts to establish this authentic South Asian pedigree. There are even Chinese transcriptions of the sounds of the Sanskrit text, an extremely unusual occurrence that testifies to the use of this short scripture for the instruction of Sanskrit and its understanding as having incantational efficacy.<sup>1</sup> However, the earliest information we have about the text is all from Chinese sources, which imply that it was abstracted from the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (Kumārajīva's translation of the 25,000-line version of the *Perfection of Wisdom*) in China rather than translated as an independent work. Also, the great translator Hsüan-tsang is even said to have acquired the text—presumably the Chinese version—in China prior to his journey to India. Hence it is less accurate to talk about the *Heart Sūtra*'s passive transmission from India as its active acquisition and use in China.

And how the Chinese did use this text! The tradition of exegesis on the *Heart Sūtra* is absolutely exceptional in the history of Chinese Buddhism. The elegant brevity and multivalent profundity of the text have made it a favorite subject of commentators from the middle of the seventh century up until the present day, and there is no other single text—nor any single group of scriptures—that has been interpreted by such a long and virtually unbroken list of illustrious authorities. Commentarial

literature does not always lend itself to quick analysis and summary, and elucidating the issues raised in a single text often requires consultation of a bewildering variety of subcommentaries and other works. Hence both traditional and modern readers have tended to look more readily to independent essays, tracts, and sermons to help them determine the doctrinal contour of an individual figure's teachings. Given the relative lack of complexity of the *Heart Sūtra* itself, however, and especially given the amenability of the text to a wide range of doctrinal interpretations and religious milieux, differences between its various commentaries can be unusually revealing as to some of the major changes in the identity and role of Buddhism in Chinese history.

#### A. Chinese Translations of the Heart Sūtra

Hsüan-tsang<sup>a</sup> (602–64) translated the *Heart Sūtra* into Chinese in 649, just a few years after his return from India.<sup>2</sup> There were at least eight other translations, from the late seventh century until sometime during the Sung; five of these were of the long version of the *sūtra*, which is no doubt later than the more widely known short version.<sup>3</sup> The intriguing question is whether there were any translations of what we now know as the *Heart Sūtra* before Hsüan-tsang, and specifically, whether it was translated as an independent work by Kumārajīva. Tao-an's<sup>b</sup> catalogue of Buddhist literature lists two similar titles that later came to be identified as referring to the *Heart Sūtra*, for both of which the translator is listed as unknown.<sup>4</sup> In two later catalogues one of these titles is attributed to Chih-ch'ien<sup>c</sup> of the Wu dynasty,<sup>5</sup> while an eighth-century catalogue attributes the other to Kumārajīva.<sup>6</sup> A Sui dynasty catalogue lists both titles as deriving from the *Ta p'in*<sup>d</sup> (see next paragraph) which here may refer to translations of the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* by Kumārajīva and others.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the bulk of both the Hsüan-tsang and Kumārajīva translations of the *Heart Sūtra* is found in Kumārajīva's *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching*,<sup>e</sup> also known as the *Ta-p'in*, and in Hsüan-tsang's translation of the *Ta po-jo ching*,<sup>f</sup> i.e., their translations of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, the 25,000-line version of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*.<sup>8</sup> Hence the original effort of translation

was Kumārajīva's. Indeed, his students were quite aware of the important doctrinal ramifications of the lines "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," as is shown explicitly in the writings of Seng-chao<sup>8</sup> (374–414).<sup>9</sup> However, since the *Heart Sūtra* is not included in contemporary lists of Kumārajīva's works it was probably not translated by him as an independent work. Although the earliest titles for this short text (assuming that they apply to the text in question) identify it as an incantation text, I know of no references to its now-famous concluding mantra nor any commentaries to the text prior to the appearance of the Hsüan-tsang translation.<sup>10</sup>

Our information about Hsüan-tsang's acquisition of the text corroborates its existence in China prior to his pilgrimage to India.<sup>11</sup> However, given the slight but significant differences in the titles found in the catalogues, it is still possible that Kumārajīva's translation only attained its final form following the appearance of Hsüan-tsang's translation. This fits very well with the chronology outlined by Conze that would place the accretion of tantric ideas into the *prajñā-pāramitā* literature around the year 600.<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, there is evidence in the Tibetan Tun-huang materials for the existence of a Chinese version of the text that is no longer extant.<sup>13</sup>

#### B. The Heart Sūtra in T'ang Dynasty Buddhism

What was the predominant understanding of the *Heart Sūtra* at the time of its translation? Although we tend to think of this text as delineating the "heart" or quintessence of the perfection of wisdom doctrine, this is apparently not the original meaning of the title. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that in China during the seventh and eighth centuries the *Heart Sūtra* was appreciated, not as an exquisite encapsulation of Buddhist doctrine, but as a *dhāraṇī* text to be used in ritual incantation. This evidence, which has been uncovered by Fukui Fuminasa,<sup>h</sup> deserves our close attention because of its important ramifications for our understanding of the text in both the Indian and Chinese contexts.

Fukui has shown that most T'ang dynasty references to the *Heart Sūtra* cite it as the *To hsin ching*,<sup>i</sup> where *to* is the last character of the transliteration of *prajñā-pāramitā*. Other titles given to the

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text in Tun-huang manuscripts are: *Po-jo to hsin ching*,<sup>j</sup> *To hsin po-jo ching*,<sup>k</sup> *Kuan-yin to hsin ching*,<sup>l</sup> *Po-lo-mi-to hsin ching*,<sup>m</sup> and *Mi-to hsin ching*.<sup>n</sup> Similar appellations occur in scriptural catalogues from T'ang China and Nara Japan and in a miscellany of materials extending into the Ch'ing.<sup>14</sup> There also exist several other Chinese Buddhist scriptures that have titles ending in the characters *hsin ching*<sup>o</sup> or "Heart Sūtra," as well as the occasional use in these texts of terms such as *hsin chou*<sup>p</sup> (lit., "heart mantra" or "mind mantra").<sup>15</sup> Fukui makes the very cogent suggestion that the term *hṛdaya* or "heart" in the title of the *Po-jo [to] hsin ching* and similar texts refers not to the "heart" or quintessence of the Buddhist dharma, but rather to *dhāraṇī* as the quintessential Buddhist practice.<sup>16</sup> Thus the doctrinal content of the *Heart Sūtra* was of importance primarily insofar as it lent power to the spiritual and ritual efficacy of the incantation.

Even so, the concise yet profound nature of the *Heart Sūtra* made it a convenient vehicle for the explanation of the Buddhist teachings, and the text was so frequently appropriated for use in doctrinal exposition that it came to be understood primarily as an exquisite statement of the Buddhist teachings.<sup>17</sup> This process of scholastic appropriation began with Hsüan-tsang's disciple Tz'u-en<sup>q</sup> (or Ta-sheng Chi,<sup>r</sup> frequently referred to as K'uei-chi<sup>s</sup>; 632–82), who wrote the first of a series of Yogācāra commentaries.<sup>18</sup> No doubt the most influential commentary in the East Asian tradition was that by Fa-tsang<sup>t</sup> (643–712), which is cited by a large number of later authors regardless of their affinities with his Hua-yen philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Advocates of T'ien-t'ai doctrine also compiled their own glosses on the text.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the large number of commentaries by members of the Ch'an school, which I will discuss below, there are also one or two texts that defy sectarian identification.<sup>21</sup> Given the nature of the text, it is perhaps not surprising that there are no Chinese commentaries based primarily on Pure Land theory.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to the Ch'an commentaries, if the impact of the scholastic commentaries was to appropriate what was originally a *dhāraṇī* text as a vehicle of doctrinal exposition, Ch'an commentators at virtually the same time sought to appropriate the text for interpretation in terms of the "contemplation of the mind" (*kuan-hsin*<sup>u</sup> or *k'an-hsin*<sup>v</sup>). Although to a certain extent the *Heart Sūtra* may have been identified with Hsüan-tsang per-

sonally, it was nonetheless an appropriate choice for use by Ch'an authorities because of its lack of manifestly sectarian identity. The evident doctrinal affinities of the *Heart Sūtra* with the Mādhyamika tradition were well in accord with the emphasis in early Ch'an on the *prajñā-pāramitā*, but in the late seventh- and early eighth-century China this emphasis was devoid of any particular sectarian implications.

## II. Ch'an-related Commentaries on the Heart Sūtra: The T'ang-Sung Series

We are fortunate in possessing a number of commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* written by members of the Ch'an tradition. These commentaries derive from different eras of Ch'an, and they fall into two distinct series: one beginning shortly after the appearance of Hsüan-tsang's translation and ending in the Sung, and another beginning with the founding of the Ming dynasty and proceeding through the Ch'ing. The following discussion of the T'ang-Sung series will focus on how various elements of the Ch'an hermeneutic deriving from different stages in the development of Chinese Ch'an were interposed into and superimposed onto a commentarial tradition.

The T'ang-Sung series of Ch'an-related *Heart Sūtra* commentaries consists of the following works:

1. A complex of three Tun-huang manuscripts, one anonymous, one bearing an obviously fictitious or untraceable attribution (its author is usually identified as a monk who died before Hsüan-tsang translated the *Heart Sūtra*), and one written by Chih-shen<sup>w</sup> (609–702), who is remembered in Ch'an as a student of Hung-jen<sup>x</sup> (600–74) and as the precursor of two important early Ch'an lineages from Szechwan.<sup>23</sup>

2. A Tun-huang text written in 727 by Ching-chüeh<sup>y</sup> (683–ca. 750), an important author belonging to the early Ch'an faction now known as the Northern school. When Ching-chüeh wrote his *Chu to hsin po-jo ching*<sup>z</sup> he was already an accomplished author, having written a now-lost commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra* and one of the two earliest proto-historical accounts of the development of Chinese Ch'an, the *Leng-ch'ieh shih-tzu chi*<sup>aa</sup> ("Records of the Masters and Disciples of the *Lankāvatāra*



*Sūtra*]).<sup>25</sup> Taken together, the Chih-shen complex of manuscripts and Ching-chüeh's commentary display increasing evidence of the growing early Ch'an hermeneutic.

3. A very widely used commentary by Nan-yang Hui-chung<sup>ab</sup> (d. 775), who was invited to Ch'ang-an in 762 and became famous as a successor to the so-called Sixth Patriarch of the orthodox Ch'an tradition, Hui-neng.<sup>ac</sup> (Since Hui-neng died in 713, this relationship was probably not based on any direct contact between the two men.) Hui-chung's commentary installed early Ch'an ideology into the tradition of commentary on the *Heart Sūtra* in a fashion that would remain acceptable to the Ch'an tradition through the Sung. During the Edo Period in Japan, and possibly as early as the Southern Sung, Hui-chung's text was circulated within a set of three Ch'an commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*.<sup>26</sup>

4. A set of verses attributed to Bodhidharma, the legendary founder of Ch'an, an attribution that is patently absurd for chronological reasons. The verses themselves are a very sensitively written product of the early ninth century or so.<sup>27</sup>

5. A commentary attributed to Ta-tien Pao-t'ung<sup>ad</sup> (732–824), whose biography is largely obscure.<sup>28</sup> This is a unique text that seems to have been largely ignored in Ch'an studies. Although internal evidence reveals that it must have been altered or emended sometime after Ta-tien's death, it seems to derive from the golden age of classical Ch'an in the middle or latter part of the ninth century.

6. Two Sung dynasty commentaries, by Fu-jung Tao-k'ai<sup>ae</sup> and Tz'u-shou Huai-shen<sup>af</sup> (d. 1131). These were widely distributed along with Hui-chung's contribution as the "three commentaries" on the *Heart Sūtra*. These two texts are relatively unimaginative, a fact that may indicate the basic incompatibility of the Sung dynasty approach to Ch'an with the enterprise of textual exegesis.<sup>29</sup>

7. A text that was written by a Chinese monk most famous for his missionary activities in Japan.<sup>30</sup> The monk in question was Lan-ch'i Tao-lung<sup>ag</sup> (Rankei Dōryū; 1213–78), who was one of the earliest and most important transmitters of Sung dynasty Ch'an to Japan. Although there may be methodological dangers involved in the use of this text to represent the Chinese tradition, I believe that Tao-lung's *Heart Sūtra* commentary—in contrast

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to the two listed in item 6—is an exquisite example of the application of the Sung dynasty "high Ch'an" approach to the use of religious texts.

Briefly put, this T'ang-Sung series manifests two major characteristics: first, the gradual interpolation of distinctive early Ch'an terminology and ideas into the interpretation of the text, and second, the superimposition on this interpretive foundation of the "encounter dialogue" style of Ch'an repartée. Due to limitations of space, I will only point out the highlights of these two developments, but two basic implications should be obvious: (a) that the early Ch'an interpretive structure was surprisingly long-lasting and (b) that the addition of classical Ch'an elements in fact reveals the fundamental disinclination of the Ch'an tradition to engage in textual exegesis.

#### A. Proto-Ch'an: The Chih-shen Complex of Commentaries

An examination of the Chih-shen complex of commentaries reveals usages that are characteristic of or even unique to early Ch'an texts. For example, the most striking feature of the anonymous manuscript is its inclusion of the following verses:

Well [should you] view the mind (*k'an-hsin*<sup>ah</sup>), view the mind correctly;

view the mind in the locus of the mind.

The mind does not perceive the locus of nonbeing (*wu-so*<sup>ai</sup>).

View the mind, and the mind will become peaceful of itself.

This locus is both emptiness and form;

the five *skandhas* are provisionally called a person.

There is no mind that can concentrate thoughts—  
let it flow and achieve truth by itself.

Form and mind are fundamentally empty and serene;

a false endeavor is the discrimination of feelings.

Moving but not obstructing the principle;

in accord with words but completely without names.<sup>31</sup>

The terms "view the mind" and "locus of nonbeing" are litmus test indicators of Northern school doctrine from around the beginning of the eighth century, and the attitude that the

mind should be allowed to "flow and achieve truth by itself" is also found in early texts. Although the distinction is not maintained throughout these three commentaries, notice that in the passage just introduced the terms "form" and "mind" (*se*<sup>31</sup> and *hsin*<sup>32</sup>) are substituted for the scriptural pair of "form" and "emptiness" (*se* and *k'ung*<sup>31</sup>).

The Chih-shen commentary uses several phrases and terms characteristic of certain later texts, but it is also unaware of a number of early Ch'an concepts. Ching-chüeh's commentary understandably contains a greater proportion of these distinctive terms and concepts.

#### B. The Pinnacle of Early Ch'an: Hui-chung's Commentary

The commentary by Hui-chung contains a statement of the most mature phase of early Ch'an, written just as the acrimonious divisiveness that had arisen in the middle of the eighth century was being resolved but before the encounter dialogue style of classical Ch'an practice had become predominant. The maturity of this message can be seen in the way in which Hui-chung places *hsin*, "mind," at the very center of his interpretation. This emphasis on mind is a direct extension of the early Ch'an interest in the "contemplation of the mind."

The following is Hui-chung's explanation of the *sūtra*'s denial of the existence of suffering, accumulation, extinction, and the path (the Chinese rendition of the four noble truths). Hui-chung's first explanation is from the perspective of cultivation:

Since the mind has that for which it seeks and attaches itself to *dharma*s, therefore it is called "truth." To energetically cultivate realization with the mind unceasingly thirsting for it is called the "truth of suffering." To extensively examine the *sūtra*s and treatises, greedily seeking the wondrous principle, is called the "truth of accumulation." To eradicate the various false thoughts, so that one seeks permanent tranquility, is called the "truth of extinction." To distantly transcend troubling disturbances, devotedly cultivating the principle of the Buddhas, is called the "truth of the path."<sup>32</sup>

Hui-chung's second explanation, which follows immediately on the first, is from the perspective of the realized sage:

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 [To understand that] the mind is fundamentally pure and numinous, with no need for recourse to cultivating realization, is called the "truth of suffering." [To understand that] the [Buddha]-nature incorporates the myriad *dharma*s—and how could one depend on seeking—is called the "truth of accumulation." [To understand that] false thoughts are not generated (*wu-sheng*,<sup>33</sup> "birthless") and fundamentally of themselves permanently serene is called the "truth of extinction." [To understand that] serenity is permanently nondual, with false and true not confused, is called the "truth of the path." . . . If you comprehend that there is no mind (*wu hsin*<sup>34</sup>), then how can the four truths exist? Therefore it is said, "no suffering, accumulation, extinction, and path."<sup>33</sup>

I should emphasize that Hui-chung's explanation of these passages is not simply a free and unlearned interpretation of the text. Early Ch'an texts frequently utilize a process known as "contemplative analysis" (*kuan-hsin shih*<sup>30</sup>), in which traditional terminology and concepts are drastically and creatively reinterpreted so as to pertain to the early Ch'an practice of the contemplation of the mind. This was an extremely important process in the generation of early Ch'an religious ideology, since it allowed Ch'an to play and experiment with its received terminological and doctrinal tradition and to produce its own new conceptual paradigms, appropriating that tradition to serve its own approach to Buddhism. This style of total reinterpretation may indeed be linked with a decline in the understanding of conventional Indian Buddhist doctrine in China insofar as it indicates a growing emphasis on individual practice rather than doctrinal systems, but it should not be interpreted in simplistic terms as a lack of understanding.

It is interesting that the most popular Ch'an commentary on the *Heart Sūtra* is the one that places the strongest emphasis on the concept of mind, as well as offering the most thought-provoking comments on the identity of form and emptiness. Instead of concentrating on these terms themselves, as did earlier Ch'an commentaries, Hui-chung resolutely shifts the focus to the mind and its attendant *dharma*s. There is here no distinction between epistemology and ontology: Form and emptiness are but two modes of manifestation and nonmanifestation that occur depending on whether the mind either "arises" (*ch'i*<sup>34</sup>) or is imperceptible.<sup>34</sup>

We should also observe Hui-chung's frequent use of reflectively paired perspectives. At one point, Hui-chung understands *sūnyatā* as the seamless reality inherent in all things, the awareness of which is obliterated by deluded thinking: "When the mind arises there is form, and when the mind is imperceptible there is emptiness." However, Hui-chung immediately reverses his terms when describing the situation of ordinary unenlightened people, using "emptiness" to refer to the unreality of the world as it is seen by foolish sentient beings. This emptiness, this foolish misapprehension of reality, disappears at the moment of enlightenment: "When the mind is taken as existent there is emptiness, and when the mind is taken as nonexistent there is being."<sup>35</sup>

This tendency to alternate between two different interpretations of the same term or concept is characteristic of early Ch'an texts. As in the redefinition of the four noble truths, Hui-chung defines reality from the perspectives of both the unenlightened but earnest practitioner and the confirmed sage. This may be considered, in fact, as Ch'an's unique extrapolation from the dyad of form and emptiness in the *Heart Sūtra*. The key to enlightenment, and thus the essential distinction between the two perspectives, is the ability to "counterilluminate" the mind-source so as to understand its crucial role and to achieve the essential "nonarising" or "nonactivation" (i.e., the absence of intentionalized mentation) of the mind.

### C. Ta-tien's Commentary and the Classical Ch'an Hermeneutic

One of the truly exceptional *Heart Sūtra* commentaries still extant is that attributed to Ta-tien Pao-t'ung. Ta-tien was a student of Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien<sup>39</sup> (700–90), who along with Ma-tsu Tao-i<sup>40</sup> is one of the figures most closely associated with the efflorescence of classical Ch'an. Very little is known about his biography, but Ta-tien is remembered for his contacts with the literatus Han Yü.<sup>35,36</sup> Internal evidence suggests that Ta-tien's *Heart Sūtra* commentary was edited sometime during the middle or latter part of the ninth century.<sup>37</sup>

The following passage provides a hint at the transition that took place during the eighth and ninth centuries from early to classical Ch'an:

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Form and emptiness are of a single type.<sup>38</sup> From the *buddhas* above to the insects below, each and every [sentient being] is fundamentally completely emptiness. The eyes are unable to see form—they can only see true emptiness. The ears are unable to hear form—they can only hear true emptiness. Although divisible into eighty-four thousand [different experiences], all perceptive and cognitive activity (*chien-wen chüeh-chih*<sup>41</sup>) derives from the six senses. Form and emptiness are not different: this is the wondrous principle of true emptiness . . . .

If you wish to eradicate birth and death, then just illuminate and destroy from a single sensory capacity. You will be instantly empty and serene, you will instantly receive your self from before the eon of emptiness.<sup>39</sup> Serene but constantly illuminating, illuminating but constantly serene.<sup>40</sup> Serene but without anything that is serene, you only perceive emptiness. Empty yet without anything that is empty, the eighty-four thousand sensory efforts and false thoughts suddenly end in a single moment. Persons are empty, and *dharmas* are empty. The path of words is cut off, and the locus of mental activity is extinguished. To make the thoughts move is to be in opposition; to evaluate it is to be in error. If you can penetrate to the bottom of this without depending on anything, you will instantly receive [this understanding]. There are no persons and no *buddhas*.<sup>41</sup>

The basic doctrinal thrust of classical Ch'an was Ma-tsu's insistence that every human action was a function of the Buddha-nature, and this passage from Ta-tien's commentary takes a similar tack in absolutizing the activities of the senses. Eyes and ears do not perceive mere form and sound (their respective categories of phenomenal reality); instead, they see and hear only true emptiness. Any sensory capacity may be used as the vehicle of enlightenment, as long as one "illuminates and destroys," i.e., illuminates so as to eliminate any dualistic distinctions, from that one perspective.<sup>42</sup> Ta-tien's commentary is explicitly subitist regarding the experience of enlightenment: "Empty yet without anything that is empty, the eighty-four thousand sensory efforts and false thoughts suddenly end in a single moment." This is the early Ch'an agenda rendered more extreme by the innovations of Ma-tsu and his followers.

This commentary is also remarkable for its inclusion of encounter dialogue material and its use of poetically evocative explanations. My favorite is the reference to "solitary brilliance

illuminating alone, like an autumn moon."<sup>43</sup> Another intriguing line is its inclusion of a variant of a saying most frequently associated with Mao Tse-tung: "If one wants to travel a thousand *li*,<sup>44</sup> a single step comes first."<sup>44</sup> The commentary also contains a line from the *I ching*<sup>45</sup> used by Liang su<sup>46</sup> and Han-yü to express identity of the sage and the common man: "to develop one's nature to perfection through the understanding of Principle" (*ch'üung-li chin-hsing*<sup>47</sup>). This line had already been noticed by Kumārajīva's students, but it also occurs in the sayings of Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan<sup>48</sup> (748–834) and Tsung-mi's<sup>49</sup> *Yüan jen lun*.<sup>50</sup> Another passage that incorporates encounter dialogue phraseology is the following:

Sentient beings do not believe that this mind is the Buddha, but the *buddhas* have many types of expedient means by which to point at sentient beings and make them see their own fundamental natures. How blue, the emerald-green bamboo—it is entirely true suchness; you must see true suchness for yourself. How profuse, the yellow flowers—they are universally *prajñā*; you must see *prajñā* for yourself. [The monk] Chia-shan<sup>51</sup> said, "There is nowhere that the Tao is not." He also said, "To see form is to see the mind. Sentient beings only see form and do not see the mind." If you are able to penetrate this to the ultimate, then while walking along, thinking of this and that, things will force themselves together (?) and you will suddenly see it for yourself. This is called "seeing the [Buddha]-nature" (*chien-hsing*<sup>52</sup>).<sup>46</sup>

In other words, this commentary gives doctrinal explanations based on a combination of early and classical Ch'an teachings, with occasional elaborations done in the rhetoric of classical Ch'an encounter dialogue.

#### D. Lan-ch'i Tao-lung's Commentary and Sung dynasty Ch'an

The *Heart Sūtra* commentary by Lan-ch'i Tao-lung (Rankei Dōryū) carries on the emphasis on the mind that appeared so strongly in Hui-chung's commentary. Indeed, it is surprising how Tao-lung reaches back into his own tradition for terms and explanations reminiscent of early Ch'an. This may have been the conscious effort of a man teaching what he must have felt

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was a relatively ill-prepared Japanese audience.

The most intriguing feature of Tao-lung's commentary is the very consistent structure of his remarks on the text: After virtually every compound or phrase in the *sūtra*, Tao-lung begins with a primary definition. Usually, these definitions are reasonably faithful to the original meaning of the scripture. After weaving in other ideas suggested by the definition, the gloss almost always ends with what can only be called a "capping phrase" in idiosyncratically Ch'an language. Although lacking in the sense of dialogue with the sages of the hallowed past, Tao-lung's proclivity to conclude each gloss with an inexplicably pithy comment is reminiscent of the approach taken in works such as the famous *Pi-yen lu*<sup>53</sup> ("Blue Cliff Records"). Thus both the presence of such comments in encounter dialogue language and their location within the text reveal the impact of Sung dynasty Ch'an rhetorical conventions on this commentary.

Tao-lung's style is readily apparent in his interpretations of the lines from the *sūtra* equating form and emptiness, which also reveal his continued emphasis on the centrality of mind. The "capping phrases" are given in italics:

#### Śāriputra (She-li-tzu<sup>54</sup>),

The universal sameness of body and mind is called *She*. Wisdom and sagacity and called *li*. The myriad *dharma*s are generated by the mind, hence it is said *tzu*. Where is the location of the generation of great wisdom? *The rabbit pushes the wheel through the waves of the Milky Way.*

#### form does not differ from emptiness,

Form is originally generated from emptiness. The deluded person sees form as being outside of true emptiness. Form arises from the mind. [The enlightened person] comprehends that the mind is originally without the characteristic of form. If you revert to the senses you will understand; if you follow their illuminations you will not. *Let them have heads of ash and faces of dirt!*

#### emptiness does not differ from form.

Emptiness is manifested dependent on form; form reverts to emptiness. Therefore, form and mind are without anything on which they rely. Therefore, if you are enlightened to the emptiness of the mind you will naturally [realize] the emptiness of the myriad *dharma*s. *What would you say, then, about true emptiness? Carp on the mountain, thatch under water.*

**Form is emptiness,**

Form is the function (*yung*<sup>bf</sup>) of emptiness; emptiness is the essence (*t'i*<sup>bg</sup>) of form. The myriad waves do not transcend the water. [Tao-lung] shouted a single shout, saying "Guest and host are distinct!"

**emptiness is form.**

Emptiness is the essence of form; form is the function of emptiness. [Tao-lung] scolded, saying "The matter begins from the repetition!"<sup>47</sup>

The doctrinal niceties in this passage are overwhelmed by Tao-lung's concluding remarks. Are we to understand them as explications of the expository statements they follow? Or is Tao-lung merely trying to get us to stop trying to understand form and emptiness with our rational minds? Further study may indicate that Tao-lung's use of two radically different types of expression—one explanatory, one performative—is related to the reflexive pairing of the perspectives of the practitioner and the sage that occurs in Hui-chung's text. Even if this turns out to be the case, Tao-lung's commentary has a disjointed quality because of its use of such different types of material. Tao-lung felt the need to explain Buddhism to his Japanese audience in the traditional Ch'an fashion, but at the same time he could not but recreate for them the spirit of Sung dynasty Ch'an as he knew it.

Engaging though it may be, Tao-lung's text highlights the fundamental incompatibility between the commentarial enterprise and the dominant thrust of Sung dynasty Ch'an. His capping phrases are an attempt to enter into dialogue with the text, not to explain it, and this particular Indian *sūtra* cannot talk back to him. The Ch'an tradition was never interested in scriptural exegesis in its own right, and once the early Ch'an appropriation and reinterpretation of the *Heart Sūtra* was completed by Hui-chung, there was little more that the Ch'an tradition could derive from within the text. Indeed, the emergence of Ch'an was in part a reaction against the scholastic tradition, and the snippets of encounter dialogue material apparent in the commentaries by Ta-tien and Tao-lung are not intrinsically related to the content of the text. That we have so few Ch'an-related *Heart Sūtra* commentaries dating from the Sung dynasty is no doubt an indication that the primary orientation of the

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"high Ch'an" of the Sung was fundamentally at odds with the goals and methods of textual exegesis.

### III. Ming T'ai-tsu and the Ming-Ch'ing series of Heart Sūtra Commentaries

The second series of *Heart Sūtra* commentaries begins from a fundamentally different perspective from that of the T'ang-Sung series. The catalyst that made this series of commentaries possible was the complex approach toward Buddhism taken by the founder of the Ming, Emperor T'ai-tsu<sup>bh</sup> (r. 1368–98). Although his government placed severe and in some ways arbitrary institutional restrictions on Buddhism, T'ai-tsu himself promoted the emergence of a syncretic approach to the three teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. In addition, he showed a personal interest at least initially favoring Buddhism as an ideology of governance, in part by sponsoring the compilation of new commentaries on a selection of basic Buddhist scriptures (in 1377–79) and by providing an imperial preface for the *Heart Sūtra*.<sup>48</sup>

Even long after T'ai-tsu's death, when changes in Ming society had rendered many of his institutional innovations impracticable, his legacy was felt in the efforts taken by scholars and officials in order to recreate the pristine order they perceived in the early years of the dynasty. The *Heart Sūtra* thus continued to be a focus of interest by both lay and ordained Buddhists throughout the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, to the extent that the number of commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* written during these dynasties is several times that of previous eras.<sup>49</sup>

More important than the numerical popularity of the *Heart Sūtra* is that this text appealed to a much wider assortment of commentators. Quite a few of the Ming commentaries use this short scripture as a vehicle for the presentation of theories concerning the unity of the Three Teachings. Among these are a short work by the iconoclastic and even antisocial Confucian Li Chih<sup>bi</sup> (1527–1602), who became a Buddhist monk in 1588 only as a social expedient, and a much longer work by the great syncretist Lin Chao-en<sup>bj</sup> (1517–98).<sup>50</sup> Lin Chao-en's work is in-

triguing in the image it reveals of the Confucian academy, with questions and answers between Lin and his students.

Several of the Ming works, by both monks and laymen, include comments based on the idiosyncratically Ch'an style of encounter dialogue, much as in the manner of Ta-tien Pao-t'ung of the T'ang. As a group, however, they return to a more straightforward hermeneutical approach of simply attempting to explain the text according to their own interpretations. Underlying the greater apparent faithfulness to the meaning of the scripture itself is a much deeper ideological agenda: The legacy of Sung dynasty Ch'an has not been lost entirely, but the followers of Ch'an during the Ming dynasty used a different assemblage of literary sources and felt a new imperative to synthesize and restate the very basics of the Buddhist religion. For example, Ming dynasty commentaries are much more inclined than those of earlier periods to cite the *Platform Sūtra*, and Hsi Ch'ao's<sup>bk</sup> late fourth century *Feng-fa yao*<sup>bl</sup> or "Essentials of the Faith" was published together with the *Heart Sūtra* and other texts during the Ming.

Not surprisingly, the interpretations found in these Ming commentaries also refer very frequently to the texts and ideas of Confucianism and Taoism. Indeed, the very popularity of the text in such a wide range of contexts is related to the increased emphasis on mind by Ming intellectuals in general—Wang Yang-ming<sup>bm</sup> (1472–1528) is of course the primary example. What we refer to in English as the *Heart Sūtra* the Chinese took to be the "scripture of the mind," the quintessential Buddhist statement regarding the mind.

#### IV. Wider Ramifications

The analysis given above of the T'ang-Sung series of commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* entails conclusions pertaining to the transformation of Ch'an Buddhism that took place during the eighth and ninth centuries. In general, these commentaries reveal the gradual imposition of early Ch'an terminology and ideas onto the understanding of the text, followed by the superimposition of encounter dialogue language deriving from the classical and Sung dynasty periods of Chinese Ch'an. Con-

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sidering the overall growth of the Ch'an tradition, this seems to be a perfectly natural progression.

The most intriguing by-product of this research is the apparent interest of Hui-chung and other commentators in working within a conceptual framework of mind and form rather than form and emptiness. Some years ago Robert Gimello described the shift from the apophatic style of Mādhyamika dialectic to the kataphatic discourse of the Chinese *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition during the early seventh century,<sup>51</sup> and here we may have discovered the intimation of a further development along similar lines. That is, rather than manipulate the array of implications deriving from the description of the world as either form or emptiness, the Chinese tradition became more interested in probing the identity of the enlightened sage. Also, the assertion that the mind perceives true emptiness rather than the differentiated stuff of phenomenal reality clearly implies the quest for a unitary world view that Charles Hartman has shown to be so apparent in the writings of the Confucian literatus Han Yü. Finally, there is also an exciting possibility that the formulation of this unitary world view was in some sense a preamble to major epistemic changes to come, particularly the fragmentation of imagery and the collapse in confidence regarding the possibilities of objective description that are apparent in late T'ang poetry.<sup>52</sup>

Although a detailed examination of the Ming-Ch'ing series of *Heart Sūtra* commentaries lies beyond the scope of this preliminary report, even this brief survey demonstrates the palpable discontinuity between this and the T'ang-Sung series of texts. In conclusion, I would like to comment on the implications of the distinctions between these two series of commentaries for the general issue of the role of Buddhism in Chinese history.

Too often scholars focus on the Sui-T'ang schools as representing the peak of Chinese Buddhism, with the religion's fate from the Sung onward depicted in terms of a virtually undifferentiated "decline." There are several obvious reasons for this impression of a Sui-T'ang pinnacle and ensuing decline: The widespread acceptance of the Naitō hypothesis, which takes the transformation of Chinese society during the T'ang as a major watershed in Chinese history, has led scholars to homologize the various religious developments of the post-T'ang dynasties

under the general rubric of popular religion. Since Buddhism flourished within the medieval culture of the T'ang and earlier dynasties, it is natural that scholars would think that it would assume the alternate state, i.e., decline, in the premodern culture of the Sung and beyond. And the very term "popular religion" carries the connotation that Buddhism was no longer a vital part of elite culture.

The judgment that post-T'ang Buddhism was in decline, or at least largely irrelevant, is in part the legacy of the emphasis of orthodox Chinese scholarship on the Confucian tradition, which revels in the Neo-Confucian "renaissance" that began in the Sung.<sup>53</sup> Another factor has been Japanese scholarship on Chinese Buddhism. Certainly the centuries of study of the Nara schools of Japanese Buddhism have led to built-in interpretive dispositions. In addition, the fact of Ennin's presence in China during one of the worst persecutions of Buddhism there may have helped fix the notion of the post-T'ang decline in the Japanese mind.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to these modern issues, there may be two other factors involved in the commonly held notion of the general decline of Buddhism after the T'ang: first, the nonsystematic nature of the Ch'an religious enterprise, and second, the long-range influence of the agenda set by Emperor T'ai-tsu of the Ming. In the first place, it is self-contradictory to accept the Ch'an school as the most intrinsically "Chinese" Buddhist school, whatever that generalization is supposed to mean, and at the same time to assert that the pinnacle of Chinese Buddhism occurred with the climax in systematic Buddhology by the Sui-T'ang schools. Systematic statements of religious philosophy are spectacular achievements easily and rightly susceptible to study and admiration, but they were not the *sine qua non* of Chinese Buddhism. Rather than conceiving of Chinese Buddhism as peaking during the T'ang and being replaced by Neo-Confucianism during the Sung, we should recognize that some aspects of Chinese Buddhism peaked at the very same time as the emergence of other important cultural and intellectual trends. Rather than a simplistic periodization of Buddhist and Neo-Confucian ages, I believe we have achieved a level of sophistication such that we can talk more meaningfully of major overlapping trends and processes.

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Second, I suspect that Chinese Buddhism during the twentieth century is still living out the effects of Ming T'ai-tsu's institutional restructuring and doctrinal homogenization of Buddhism, which sometimes makes it hard for us to see the distinctions inherent in the older forms of the tradition. The pedagogical agenda of late Ming Buddhism involved an effort to return to the basics, to reach the populace with easily understood explanations of the heart of Buddhism. It was also an avowedly syncretic agenda, which obscured the doctrinal and sectarian (or, if you will, lineage) distinctions of the past. Neither the absence of doctrinal systematization nor the presence of syncretism is necessarily synonymous with decline or a lack of creativity, let alone with a loss of significance of Buddhism itself in Chinese culture. We should be able to search for the distinctions apparent in earlier groups, trends, and movements without immediately succumbing to an overly rigid definition of Buddhist "schools," but neither should we conclude that the absence of discretely defined schools indicates disintegration and decline.

#### NOTES

This preliminary research report, which was written while the author was a postdoctoral fellow at the John King Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University, is based on a presentation given at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in Atlanta in November, 1986; a longer and more detailed study will be published at a later date. The author would like to thank Donald Lopez for the invitation that led to the AAR presentation, Jan Nattier for her extensive input concerning the content and wording of this paper, and David Eckel and the members of the Buddhist Studies Forum at Harvard for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

1. See notes 11 and 30 below.

2. See the *Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching*,<sup>bn</sup> T8.848c, and Mochizuki Shinkō, *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten*, (10 vols.; Tokyo: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1933-36), 5: 4265c-67b. Mochizuki, p. 4266a, says the translation was done in the fifth month of 649 at Mount Chung-nan's Ts'ui-wei kung.<sup>bo</sup>

3. The pilgrim and translator I-ching<sup>bp</sup> (often written I-tsing; 635-713) is also supposed to have translated the text (see Mochizuki 5: 4266a-c), and Bodhiruci (or Dharmaruci) and Śikṣānanda each prepared translations of the text incorporating changes made on behalf of Empress Wu. These were done in 693 and sometime during the years 695-710, respectively. (This is according to Shīio Benkyō, *Bukkyō kyōten gaisetsu* [Introduction to the Buddhist scrip-

tures], [Tokyo: Kōshisha shobō, 1933], p. 147. Shiio's reference to Bodhiruci [or Dharmaruci] may be an erroneous citation of a much later reference to a translation by Paramārtha or Bodhiruci; see note 30 below.) In 738 the Magadhan monk Fa-yüeh<sup>ba</sup> (\*Dharmacandra; 653–743), working in Ch'ang-an, produced the first translation of the long version of the *Heart Sūtra*; see T8.849a–b. (The restorations of this and other translators' names, which may not be reliable, are from Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* [The Hague: Mouton & Co.—S-Gravenhage, 1960], p. 29.) Other translations of the long version, which vary enough to suggest further development of the Sanskrit text itself, were done in 790 (by Po-jo<sup>br</sup> [Prajñā], who Conze reports was from Kafiristan and studied in Kashmir and at Nālandā, and Li-yen<sup>bs</sup>; see T8.849b–50a), 855 (by Fa-ch'eng<sup>bt</sup> from the Tibetan; see T8.850b–51a), 861 (by Chih-hui Lun<sup>bu</sup> [\*Prajñācakra]; see T8.850a–b), and sometime during the Sung dynasty (by Shih-hu<sup>bv</sup> [\*Dānapala], who was from Oddiyāna and began his translation work in China in 982; see T8.852b–c). The translations by Hsüan-tsang and Fa-ch'eng were in widespread use at Tun-huang, where Fa-ch'eng (Tib. Chos-grub) was a very prominent monk who translated various texts from Chinese to Tibetan and vice versa.

4. See the *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi*<sup>bw</sup> 4 (T55.31b), which lists the *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i chuan*<sup>bx</sup> ("Divine Incantation of the Great Perfection of Wisdom in one fascicle") and *Po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i-chuan*. The latter is glossed as being a variant of the first. Since the extant Sanskrit versions of the *Heart Sūtra* do not identify it as a *sūtra*, it is noteworthy that neither of these texts is labelled *ching*,<sup>by</sup> "sūtra."

5. These are the *Li-tai san-pao chi*<sup>bz</sup> 4 and 5 (T49.55c and 58b) and *Ta-T'ang nei-tien lu*<sup>ca</sup> 2 (T55.229a). Here the title actually reads [*Mo-ho*] *po-jo po-lo-mi chou ching i chuan*<sup>cb</sup> ("Sūtra of the Incantation of the [Great] Perfection of Wisdom in one fascicle").

6. The title of the translation attributed to Kumārajīva is *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ta ming-chou ching*<sup>cc</sup> ("Great Wisdom Incantation of the Great Perfection of Wisdom"); see T8.847c. This title, which is slightly different from the found in earlier catalogues, occurs in the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*<sup>cd</sup> 4 (T55.512b) among Kumārajīva's works.

7. See the *Chung-ching mu-lu*<sup>cc</sup> 2 by Fa-ching<sup>cd</sup> (T55.123b). The titles used here are similar to those found in the *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi*, except for the addition of *ching*, "sūtra." There is some implicit support in Tz'u-en's commentary (mentioned in n. 18 below) for the interpretation that the *Heart Sūtra* was abstracted from the larger text.

8. As indicated in Shiio, p. 146, see Kumārajīva's *Ta-p'in*, T8.223c, 283a–85c, and 286a–87a (the latter two are sections that identify the perfection of wisdom in general terms with mantra), and Hsüan-tsang's *Ta po-jo po-lo-mi-to ching*, T7.11c. There are slight differences between the texts of the Kumārajīva's *Ta-p'in*, T8.223c, 283a–85c, and 286a–87a (the latter two are sections that identify the perfection of wisdom in general terms with mantra), and Hsüan-tsang's *Ta po-jo po-lo-mi-to ching*, T7.11c. There are slight differences between the texts of the Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang versions, probably indicating differences in the original Sanskrit texts.

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9. See *Jōron kenkyū* [Studies in the *Chao lun*], ed. Tsukamoto Zenryū (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1955), pp. 51–52, or T45.156c.

10. The only other occurrence of the *Heart Sūtra* mantra that I have come across is in a collection of *dhāraṇī* and similar material translated in 653, the *To-lo-ni chi ching*<sup>cs</sup> 3, T18.807b.

11. A preface to the *Heart Sūtra*, which occurs at T8.851a–b and is based on the Tun-huang manuscript Stein 700, states that Hsüan-tsang received the text in Szechwan prior to departing for India. See the translation of this preface in Leon Hurvitz, "Hsüan-tsang (602–664) and the *Heart Sūtra*," *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, ed. Lewis Lancaster, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, no. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1977), p. 109–10. The version of the *Heart Sūtra* contained in Stein 700 is extremely interesting, in that it is a transliteration of the Sanskrit text in Chinese characters with interlineal glosses correlating the words of the transliterated original with the Chinese glosses of Hsüan-tsang's translation. The glosses and punctuation do not always divide the Sanskrit words correctly, but the underlying text seems to correspond to the modern version transcribed in Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books: The Diamond Sutra; The Heart Sutra* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 77–107. Hurvitz, pp. 110–11, includes a rendering of the text into English with the glosses interpreted.

12. See *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 20–24. Based on the existence of the Kumārajīva translation, on p. 18 Conze identifies the *Heart Sūtra* as having been composed before the year 400.

13. This evidence, which has some bearing on the early transmission of Buddhism to Tibet, will be dealt with in an article to be published at a later date by myself and Jan Nattier.

14. See Fukui Fumimasa, "Chūgoku ni okeru Hannya shingyō kan no hensen" [Changes in the Understanding of the *Heart Sūtra* in China], *Tōhōgaku* 64 (July 1982): 43–56, especially pp. 43–45. Essentially the same material is said to be found in Fukui's "Tashin kyō no seiritsu" [The formation of the *To hsin ching*], *Tendai gaku* 24 (November 1972). A more detailed statement of Fukui's argument, including a listing of the titles of Tun-huang versions of the *Heart Sūtra* and its commentaries, may be found in the same author's "Tonkō bon," pp. 1–8. I would like to thank Professor Yoshizu Yoshihide of Komazawa University for sending me copies of the articles by Fukui cited in this study, as well as for showing me Fukui's recent *Hannya shingyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1987) incorporating these same studies.

15. Fukui suggests that the abbreviation *Hsin ching* or "Heart Sūtra" was applied to the text by its scholastic commentators, that even here there is evidence that the character *to* has been omitted by later editors, and that the title *Po-jo hsin ching* is almost entirely unattested in sources prior to the Sung. See Fukui, "Hensen," pp. 46–47. Unfortunately, Fukui fails to notice the occurrence of the title *Po-jo hsin ching* in Hui-li's biography of Hsüan-tsang (T50.224b). Fukui asserts that the abbreviation *Hsin ching* came to be generally used only from the fourteenth century onward, when the text became much more popular as a subject of written commentaries. See Fukui, "Hensen," p. 46.

16. See Fukui, "Hensen," pp. 48–51. On p. 50, Fukui cites corroborating



opinions by M. Winternitz and P. L. Vaidya. In addition, he suggests that whereas Kumārajīva and other translators rendered the term *hṛdaya* in this sense with Chinese equivalents meaning "mantra," Hsüan-tsang used the character *hsin* for both *hṛdaya* and *citta*, thus causing the later confusion.

17. I believe that Fukui, "Hensen," p. 53, goes too far when he suggests that there were virtually no T'ang and Sung interpretations of the *Heart Sūtra* that emphasized the doctrine of emptiness over the efficacy of the mantra.

18. Tz'u-en's commentary is the *Po-jo hsin ching yu-tsan*<sup>ch</sup>; see T33.523b-42c. There is a preface to this by Miao Shen-jung<sup>ci</sup> (632-82), (*Po-jo hsin ching yu-tsan hsü*, Z2B, 23, 1, 90a-c), and a subcommentary by Shou-ch'ien<sup>ci</sup> of the Sung dynasty, (*Po-jo hsin ching yu-tsan k'ung-t'ung chi*,<sup>ck</sup> Z1, 41, 3, 258c-314d). Shou-ch'ien also composed a diagrammatic interpretation of the text (*Po-jo hsin ching yu-tsan t'ien-kai k'o*,<sup>cl</sup> Z1, 41, 3, 240a-58b). In addition, there are T'ang Yogācāra commentaries by the Korean authority Wōnch'ūk<sup>cm</sup> (613-96) (*Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching tsan*,<sup>cn</sup> Z1, 41, 4, 308b-28c) and by Ching-mai<sup>co</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching shu*,<sup>cp</sup> Z1, 41, 3, 213a-18b), both of which criticize the teaching of *prajñā* on the basis of the Yogācāra doctrine.

19. Fa-tsang's commentary, which was composed in 702, is the *Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching lüeh-shu*,<sup>ca</sup> T33.552a-55b (including a short postface by Chang Yüeh<sup>ct</sup>). There are two Sung dynasty subcommentaries to this text: The earlier is by Chung-hsi<sup>cs</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching lüeh-shu hsien-cheng chi*,<sup>ct</sup> Z1, 41, 4, 340a-56c); the later one was written by Shih-hui<sup>cu</sup> in 1165 (*Po-jo hsin ching lüeh-shu lien-chu chi*,<sup>cv</sup> T33.555b-68c). Shih-hui's subcommentary is a difficult and controversial text, which inspired the composition of a work by the late Ming and early Ch'ing dynasty figure Ch'ien Ch'ien-i<sup>cw</sup> (1582-1664). Written in 1655, Ch'ien's commentary was based on that of Fa-tsang but also referred to a work by Tu-shun<sup>cx</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching lüeh-shu hsiao-ch'ao*,<sup>cy</sup> Z1, 41, 4, 357a-90d). Ch'ien's work was preceded by three other Ming dynasty *Heart Sūtra* commentaries likewise heavily indebted to Fa-tsang: In 1587, Hsieh Kuan-k'uang<sup>cz</sup> compiled two works with homophonous titles, mostly following Fa-tsang and Wen-ts'ai<sup>da</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching shih-i*,<sup>db</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 410d-12d and 413a-21c). The latter of these two is a detailed attempt to resolve doubts arising from the numerous divergent interpretations found in earlier commentaries. In 1617, Chu Wan-li<sup>dc</sup> compiled a commentary (*Po-jo hsin ching chu-chieh*,<sup>dd</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 435d-38c), drawing from Fa-tsang and others.

20. The earliest T'ien-t'ai commentary is attributed, probably apocryphally, to Ming-k'uang<sup>de</sup> of the T'ang; this is the *Po-jo hsin ching [lüeh] shu*, Z1, 41, 4, 328d-30c. The only Sung dynasty T'ien-t'ai commentaries are those by Chih-yüan<sup>df</sup> (976-1022), both of which were composed in 1017. These are the *Po-jo hsin ching shu* and *Po-jo hsin ching shu i-mou ch'ao*,<sup>dg</sup> Z1, 41, 4, 330d-34a and 334b-39d. The first of these refers to the T'ang dynasty commentary attributed to Hui-ching (discussed in section IIA below). The second text is a general explanation dealing with possible misunderstandings of the first. There are Ming dynasty T'ien-t'ai commentaries by Chih-hsü<sup>dh</sup> (1599-1655) (*Po-jo hsin ching shih yao*,<sup>di</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 470c-71d), Ta-wen<sup>dj</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching cheng-yen*,<sup>dk</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 443b-46d), and Cheng-hsiang T'i-ju<sup>dl</sup> (*Po-jo hsin ching fa-yin*,<sup>dm</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 452d-56d). The last of these was done in 1635.

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21. One of these is attributed to a monk identified only as Deva of Central India (*Po-jo hsin ching chu*, Z1, 41, 4, 315a-318a). This is an undated word-by-word explanation of the text, which although clearly transcribed by a native Chinese monk could well be based on the non-formulaic oral explanations of an Indian master. Another interesting text is the fragment preserved at Tun-huang, the *Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching huan-yüan shu*,<sup>dn</sup> T85.167b-659a, based on Stein 3019. This commentary cites the *Lankāvatāra* and *Lotus Sūtras* and emphasizes the use of the text in chanting.

22. Even during the Ming dynasty, the Ch'an figures Tzu-po Chen-k'o<sup>do</sup> and Han-shan Te-ch'ing<sup>dp</sup> commented on the *Heart Sūtra*, but not the advocate of Pure Land devotionalism Chu-hung.<sup>dq</sup> At least one such text was written in Japan by Genshin<sup>dr</sup>, who is renowned for his *Ōjōyōshū*.<sup>ds</sup> A list of other Japanese commentators on the *Heart Sūtra*, incidentally, reads like a veritable who's who of that country's Buddhist tradition. For example, Saichō,<sup>dt</sup> Kūkai,<sup>du</sup> and their successors wrote commentaries and subcommentaries on the text. (Kūkai's is interesting for its use of Kumārajīva's translation, although the text actually cited by Kūkai is identical to Hsüan-tsang's translation.) Within the Japanese Zen tradition, Ikkyū,<sup>dv</sup> Menzan,<sup>dw</sup> Bankei,<sup>dx</sup> Hakuin,<sup>dy</sup> and Muchaku Dōchū<sup>dz</sup> also wrote commentaries on the text.

23. The anonymous text is represented in an untitled manuscript (both the beginning and end are missing) preserved at the Ryūkyō University Library. Introduced by Ogawa Kan'ichi, this short fragment of 172 lines includes part of the preface and a substantial portion of the text. See Ogawa's "Hannya haramitta shingyō kaidai" [Explanation of the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*], *Seiki bunka kenkyū*, vol. 1, *Tonkō Bukkyō shiryō* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1958), pp. 79-87. Sample plates of the manuscript are given on p. 80, while the text is printed on pp. 81-84; also see the English summary on pp. 10-13 (from the back). The second of the three commentaries is attributed to a monk named Hui-ching,<sup>ea</sup> usually identified as the Hui-ching of Chi-kuo ssu<sup>eb</sup> (578-645). See the *Po-jo hsin ching shu*, Z1, 41, 3, 206a-12d. (Fukui, "Tonkō bon," p. 8, indicates that Stein 554, on which the *Zoku zōkyō* edition is based, is actually entitled *To hsin ching* rather than *Hsin ching*.) Shiio, p. 154n, claims that Hui-ching was asked to lecture on the *Heart Sūtra* in 624 and suggests that the commentary may have been based on an earlier draft of the Hsüan-tsang translation. However, Hui-ching's very long biography in the *HSKC*, T50.441d-46b, does not mention any such event in 624 (nor does it make any reference at all to the *Heart Sūtra*), and I do not know the source of Shiio's information. Since this would have been before Hsüan-tsang had even received the text or returned from India, the date given may be a misprint. The title of the third version is *Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching shu*; see Yanagida Seizan, "Shishū Sen zenji sen, *Hannya shingyō so' kō*," ed. Yanagida Seizan and Umehara Takeshi, *Yamada Mumon rōshi koki kinen shu: Hana samazama* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1972), pp. 145-77. On pp. 152-56 Yanagida indicates that there are five manuscripts of this commentary: Pelliot 2178 and 4940, Peking Wei-52 and *ch'üeh*-9, and Stein 839.

24. According to Fukui, "Tonkō bon," p. 7, this was the original title of Ching-chüeh's work. Hsiang Ta's<sup>ec</sup> transcription altered this to *Chu po-jo to*

*hsin ching*, and Yanagida amended this to *Chu po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching*. As Fukui implies in his n. 6 (p. 24), Yanagida was presumably following the lead set by Chikusa Masaaki.

25. This is an extremely important early Ch'an text. See the annotated Japanese and French translations by Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi, 1—Ryōga shiji ki—Den'hōbōki*, Zen no goroku, no. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1971), pp. 47–326, and Bernard Faure, *La Volonté d'Orthodoxie: Généalogie et doctrine du bouddhisme Ch'an et l'école du Nord—d'après l'une de ses chroniques, le Leng-chia shih-tzu chi (début du 8e s.)* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Paris, 1984), pp. 470–792. An unsatisfactory English translation occurs in *Zen Dawn: Early Zen Texts from Tun Huang*, trans. J. C. Cleary (Boston and London: Shambala, 1986), pp. 17–78. See my review of Cleary's book in *Philosophy East and West* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 1986): 138–46. The work is also discussed in my *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 88–91.

26. The *Po-jo hsin ching san chū*<sup>cl</sup> (or *Hannya shingyō sanchū*) (Z1, 41, 4, 390a–96a) was reprinted in 1791; it is uncertain where and when the prior edition was done. See Ui Hakuju, "Nan'yō Echū no shingyō chūsho" [Nan-yang Hui-chung's *Commentary on the Heart Sūtra*], ed. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, *Zen no ronkō—Suzuki Daisetsu hakase kiju kinen ronbunshū*—(Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1949), pp. 69–81.

27. See the *Po-jo hsin ching sung*,<sup>ce</sup> T48.365a–66c. This is a short work, with a total of 272 characters in both title and text, with 37 verses in 8-line stanzas of 5 characters per line. These verses are contained in a Sung dynasty compilation of works attributed to Bodhidharma, the *Shao-shih liu men*<sup>cf</sup> ("Six Texts from Bodhidharma's Peak"). Since the verses use the famous line "fundamentally there is not a single thing" from the *Platform Sūtra*, we may date them to sometime after about 800. (See T48.365c and p. 366a.) A closer examination of these verses and a comparison with other classical Ch'an verse compositions, i.e., transmission verses, and the commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra* attributed to Hui-neng will no doubt yield a more exact dating and a better understanding of the text in general. The use of Yogācāra terminology in these verses may turn out to be an important indication of their origins.

28. The title is *Po-jo hsin ching chu-chieh*,<sup>cs</sup> Z1, 42, 1, 34d–35d.

29. See Ui Hakuju, "Jiju zenji Eshin no Hannya shingyō chū" [Ch'an Master Tz'u-shou Huai-shen's *Commentary on the Heart of Wisdom Sūtra*], *Bukkyō to bunka—Suzuki Daisetsu hakase shōju kinen ronbunshū* (Tokyo: Suzuki Daisetsu hakase shōju kinenkai kan, 1960), pp. 1–6. Ui is supposed to have written an article on Fu-jung Tao-k'ai's commentary, but I have been unable to locate it. See the discussion on Sung dynasty Ch'an and textual exegesis at the end of section IID.

30. This commentary, which is known by the title *Rankei Dōryū chū shin'yō*<sup>ch</sup> ("Lan-ch'i Tao-lung's *Commentary on the Essentials of Mind*"), occurs in his collected works, the *Daikaku shū roku*<sup>ci</sup> in one fascicle, following a transliteration of the Sanskrit text. See the *Dai Nippon Bukkyō zensho*, 95: 101–16, or *Po-jo po-lo-mi-to hsin ching chu*, Z1, 41, 5, 397a–99b. Comments by the editor of Tao-lung's collected works, the layman Mushō,<sup>ci</sup> reveal a spirit of intense

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competition with the Shingon school. In the process, it is asserted that the version of the *Heart Sūtra* obtained by Hsüan-tsang in China prior to his journey to India was the Sanskrit version and not Kumārajīva's Chinese translation. In fact, Tao-lung's editor denies that Kumārajīva ever translated the text, suggesting instead that the pre-Hsüan-tsang translations were by Chih-Ch'ien and either Paramārtha or Bodhiruci. In addition, he points out that since the text had been in circulation in Chinese translation for at least two hundred years, Hsüan-tsang would not have had to receive this from a spirit monk. See the *Daikaku shū roku*, p. 3a–b (103a–b). The motivation for these and other comments must be related to the fact that Kūkai's famous commentary on the *Heart Sūtra* used the Kumārajīva translation. In addition, Tao-lung's birth in Szechwan would have made him more likely to accept the account placing Hsüan-tsang's initial acquisition of the *Heart Sūtra* there. This last point is not lost upon Tao-lung's editor; see pp. 4b–5a (104b–5a).

31. Ogawa, pp. 83b, 84a, and 84b. The first verse has one character too many; the initial character *hao*,<sup>ck</sup> "well," should probably be deleted.

32. Ui, "Nan'yō Echū," p. 78.

33. Ui, "Nan'yō Echū," p. 81.

34. Ui, "Nan'yō Echū," p. 76.

35. These two quotations also occur on p. 76.

36. Dialogues between Ta-tien and Shih-t'ou and some sayings of Ta-tien's are recorded in the *Ching-te ch'üan-teng lu*,<sup>cl</sup> T51.312c–13a, but the only biographical information is that his residence was at Mount Ling in Ch'ao-chou<sup>cm</sup> (Ch'ao-an hsien, Kwangtung). For the contact between him and Han Yü, see Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 93–95.

37. See n. 46 below.

38. This line also occurs in the verses attributed to Bodhidharma.

39. One of the four *kalpas* or eons, this is the period between the total destruction of the world system and the beginning of its regeneration. It is twenty small eons in duration.

40. The *locus classicus* of the famous line "serene but constantly illuminating," etc., is the *P'u-sa ying-lo pen-yeh ching*<sup>cm</sup> 2, T24.1018b. See Yanagida, *Shoki no Zenshi 1*, p. 319. The earliest unascribed Ch'an-related occurrence I have found is in the *Wu fang-pien*<sup>co</sup> (see McRae, *Northern School*, p. 178). A similar line, "functioning but permanently empty, empty but permanently functioning," occurs in Shen-hui's<sup>cp</sup> *Hsien-tsung chi*<sup>ca</sup> in the *Ching-te ch'üan-teng lu*, T51.459a.

41. Z1, 42, 1, 34b–c.

42. This process is described in Tao-lung's commentary as "reverting" to the source of the senses, rather than following the myriad details that they illuminate; see his gloss on "form does not differ from emptiness" quoted in the next section. This also parallels the long-standing wisdom within the Buddhist meditation tradition that any sensory capacity could serve as the proper subject of contemplation.

43. P. 35a.

44. See p. 34c; the original line, which is worded somewhat differently,

is from the *Lao-tzu* 64.

45. See the commentary, p. 34b, and Hartman, pp. 190–93, who traces the line through K'ung Ying-ta<sup>41</sup> (574–648) to Tsung-mi. Hartman, p. 193, suggests that Tsung-mi's "insistence on reserving this phrase for the highest expression of the Buddhist faith may testify to the strength of its Buddhist connotation during this period."

46. P. 34b. Where I have "many types" of expedient means, the text has "many active"; I am emending to *tung*<sup>42</sup> to *chung*.<sup>43</sup> The translation "things will force themselves together" is tentative; the text contains a character I am assuming is a variant of *tsa*,<sup>44</sup> "to pressure." Also, the extent of the quotation from Chia-shan is unclear, and its attribution to him may be an editorial error. Chia-shan Shan-hui<sup>45</sup> (805–81), who figures prominently in the *Tsu-l'ang chi*<sup>46</sup> and *Ching-te Ch'üan-teng lu*, was a fourth-generation successor of Shih-t'ou's through Yao-shan Wei-yen<sup>47</sup> (744–827). It may be that his name was inadvertently added to the *Heart Sūtra* commentary sometime after its compilation, since the saying attributed to him here is identified with Ma-tsu and his successors Kuei-shan Ling-yu<sup>48</sup> (771–853) and Yang-shan Hui-chi<sup>49</sup> (807–83). If this were the case, there is no reason to assume the commentary was altered in any significant way after Ta-tien's death.

47. Pp. 6b–7a (106b–7a). The last phrase might also be read "from the [opening] politenesses!]"

48. See Fukui Fumimasa, "Min Taiso no Hannya shingyō rikai" [Ming T'ai-tsu's understanding of the *Heart Sūtra*], *Makio Ryōkai hakase shōju kinen ronshū: Chūgoku no shūkyō—shisō to kagaku* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), pp. 399–408. Fukui cites a number of sources, including Kuo Ming [Guo Ming], *Ming-Ch'ing Fo-chiao* [Buddhism during the Ming and Ch'ing] (Fukien, China: Fu-chien jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1982).

49. Fukui, "Min Taiso," p. 399, points out that there were about ten *Heart Sūtra* commentaries written during the T'ang, less than ten during the Sung, and over thirty during the Ming. About a dozen of the Ming commentaries display overt Ch'an influence. I know of only one commentary written during the Yüan; unfortunately, it is no longer extant.

50. Li Chih's commentary is titled *Po-jo hsin ching chien-shih*<sup>50a</sup> or *Po-jo hsin ching t'i-kang*,<sup>50b</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 424b–25a. Less than 800 characters long, this text lacks any distinctive content. Lin Chao-en actually wrote two works on the *Heart Sūtra*: the *Po-jo hsin ching shih-lieh*,<sup>50c</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 425b–29c, and the *Hsin ching kai-lun*,<sup>50d</sup> Z1, 41, 5, 429d–35a. The former is a general commentary and the latter a line-by-line exegesis. On Li Chih, see Hok-lam Chan, *Li Chih 1527–1602 in Contemporary Chinese Historiography: New Light on His Life and Works* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980), especially pp. 89–90. Also see Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), not only for its excellent treatment of Lin but also with regard to Li Chih (see pp. 52–54).

51. Robert M. Gimello, "Apophatic and kataphatic discourse in Mahāyāna: A Chinese view," *Philosophy East and West* 26, no. 2 (April 1976): 117–36.

52. I am referring here to work in progress by Michael Fuller at Harvard,

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which draws in turn on the writings of Stephen Owen.

53. I am currently finishing a study of Hu Shih's researches on Shen-hui, which did as much to inform the modern stereotype of the role of Ch'an in the decline of Chinese Buddhism as to establish the field of Ch'an studies.

54. I do not intend this as a blanket criticism of Japanese scholars, nor would I suggest any hesitation to use the fruits of their efforts. On the contrary, given the relative dearth of serious modern Chinese scholarship on East Asian Buddhism it is scholarship led by the Japanese and by those who have studied at the feet of Japanese teachers that is taking us beyond the most problematic views of Chinese Buddhist history.

### Character Glossary

a 玄奘	ac 惠能
b 道安	ad 大輦寶通
c 智諫	ae 芙蓉道楷
d 大品	af 慈受懷深
e 摩訶般若波羅蜜經	ag 闍溪道隆
f 大般若經	ah 看心
g 僧肇	ai 無所
h 福井文雅	aj 色
i 多心經	ak 心
j 般若心經	al 空
k 多心般若經	am 無生
l 觀音多心經	an 無心
m 波羅蜜多經	ao 觀心釋
n 蜜多心經	ap 絕
o 心經	aq 石頭希遷
p 心咒	ar 馬祖道一
q 慈恩	as 韓愈
r 大乘基	at 見聞覺知
s 竊基	au 里
t 法藏	av 易經
u 觀心	aw 梁肅
v 看心	ax 窮理盡性
w 智洗	ay 南泉普願
x 弘忍	az 宗密
y 淨覺	ba 原人論
z 注多心般若經	bb 夾山
aa 楞伽師資記	bc 見性
ab 南陽慧忠	bd 碧巖錄

85. The tradition that sGam-po-pa was an incarnation of the *bodhisattva* Candraprabhakumara, guardian of the *Samādhirāja*, was so well established that in many texts “Zla-'od gZhon-nu” is used, without explanation, for sGam-po-pa rather than for the original Candraprabhakumara.

86. See [HB85] for a comparison between Pao T'ang Ch'an and early rdzogs-chen, based on the *rDo-rje sems-dpa' nam-mkha' che rtsa-ba'i rgyud skye-ba med-pa*, which concludes their incompatibility on similar grounds.

87. Padma dKar-po lists three *lla-ba ngan-sel* works: *thabs khyad-du gsod-pa bzlog-pa'i phyir lla-ba ngan-sel dang!* *lla-ba ngan-sel-gyi dran-pa dang!* *las dang-po-pa'i bya-ba mdor-bsdus!* . . . ; in S the extra work is numbered 4. Other sources make no reference to this third work.

88. This work, numbered 25 in S, appears in all versions of Padma dKar-po's list but does not seem to appear in the other lists.

89. *de'i ring (lho-brag mkhar-chu)-la rgya'i ha-shang Mahāyāna'i slob-ma dar-tel lus ngag-gi chos-spyod dge-ba-byas-pas sangs-mi-rgya-ba dang!* *yid-la-mi-byed-pas sangs-rgya zer-ba'i lugs-dar!* *de-la ston-mun-du grags!* *dpal-dbyangs dang!* *sba ratna-la-sogs-pa ny ung-shas shig mkhan-po'i rjes-su 'brang!* *de-la 'ken-min rgya'i skad yin!* *bod-skad-du cig-car-ba dang rim-skyes-la* (read: -pa) *zer!* *de-dag ma-mihun-par rtsod-pa-nal rgyal-pos ācārya-bodhisattva'i lugs bzhin-du gyis shig gsungs-pas!* *ston-mun-pa-nams khros-tel rtsen-min-pa ril gsod zer!* (C, 164b).

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## Indian Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: The Politics of Interpretation

by Malcolm David Eckel

### I.

Edward Conze opens one of his many articles on the Perfection of Wisdom Literature by saying that “the *Heart Sūtra* is easily the best known of all *Prajñāpāramitā* texts”.<sup>1</sup> There are few who would quarrel with Conze's judgment. The text certainly functions for many people as a statement of the essence of the Mahāyāna, and if the *Heart Sūtra* itself were reduced to an essence, it would be the phrase “Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form”. For someone who now looks back on the growth of the Mahāyāna tradition and tries to understand the central problems of the tradition in their original context, it seems only natural to ask how this most essential of phrases was understood by the Indian commentators whose works are preserved in the Tibetan canonical tradition. Certainly it clarifies the problem of understanding to know how the phrase was understood by those who stood in the most direct historical and linguistic proximity to the text.

But to approach the Indian commentators in the hope that they will somehow yield the “original” meaning of the text is to invite disappointment. Like us, the commentators were creatures of their own time. They had their own interests and preoccupations that forced them not to misinterpret the text but to use it for their own purposes. What we discover when we open the Indian commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* is not the pristine meaning of the *sūtra* itself, stripped of all the imaginative accretions imposed by later centuries, but what a distinctive group of commentators thought it meant. And what they thought it meant was shaped as much by the preoccupations of their own

time as it was by the words of the *sūtra* itself.

By "preoccupation" I mean not only the obvious concepts and theories that occupied the minds of the intellectuals who commented on the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and whose commentaries gained enough notoriety or prestige to be preserved, but even the idea of commentary itself. As commentators and interpreters in our own right, we are so used to the assumption that texts are meant to be interpreted that we overlook how rare it is in many traditions to interpret a text and rarer still to have the interpretation preserved. The act of interpretation itself involves a distinctive and rather narrow conception of the function of a text. Judging by the record of Hsüan-tsang's visit to India, the *Heart Sūtra*, and in particular the *mantra* contained in the last few lines, had a much broader function than to serve simply as an object of interpretation. Hsüan-tsang tells a story of the philosopher Bhāvaviveka.<sup>2</sup> Bhāvaviveka was the kind of person who was well versed in the art of interpretation, but in Hsüan-tsang's story Bhāvaviveka did not interpret the *Heart Sūtra*. He used it as a chant to generate a vision of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.

The chant did not work its effect without the addition of some related physical discipline. Bhāvaviveka reinforced the chant with a period of fasting. But in time the chant brought him the vision he wanted and an answer to one of his most vexing questions. Bhāvaviveka may, at some other time, have sat with a group of students and commented on the text of the *sūtra*. About that part of the story Hsüan-tsang has nothing to say. But Hsüan-tsang's story does make it clear that when we focus exclusively on "interpretation", as if that were the only way someone could stand in relation to a text, we may fatally distort its function. Interpretation may be only one of the many things that are done with a text. The fact that it is also what we are accustomed to doing with a text should not blind us to the other ways a text can function.

When a text like the *Heart Sūtra* can serve such a range of functions, from acting as a chant to summon a celestial *bodhisattva* to providing a focus of worship,<sup>3</sup> we should view the existence of commentaries on the text with a certain sense of wonderment and even with suspicion. This is a use of the text that we can understand, but it should provoke a host of different questions.

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Why, of all the possible uses to which the *Heart Sūtra* can be put, did the commentators choose this one? Why are the commentators apparently clustered within a narrow historical period? Was it only in this period that the text was available, or was it only in this period that the conditions were ripe for its interpretation? And why, in all that has been said and written about this text, has the Tibetan canonical tradition chosen to preserve these works, and preserve them in a context that makes of the commentaries themselves not just a source of new commentary, but also a focus of veneration? I will not answer all these questions here, but I would like to make some comment of my own not just on the interpretation found in the text of the Indian commentaries, but on the complex and overlapping functions performed by the text in the work of the commentators themselves. I will leave it to some other scholar in a later generation to ask why we choose to spend such effort writing commentaries on commentaries on a phrase from an Indian text.

## II.

The Tibetan canon preserves the text of seven Indian commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*, attributed to the authors Vimālamitra, Jñānamitra, Vajrapāṇi, Praśāstrasena, Kamalaśīla, Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (more commonly known as Atīśa), and Śrī Mahājāna.<sup>4</sup> As far as one can determine from Tibetan historical sources, the seven commentaries come from the period between the middle of the eighth century and the middle of the eleventh century, a period that encompasses both of the "diffusions" of the Dharma into Tibet. Many of the commentators were teachers of Tibetan students or played some other significant role in the dissemination of Buddhist ideas in Tibet. Vimālamitra, for example, is treated as one of the chief teachers of the *rdzogs chen* tradition of the *rNying-ma* school.<sup>5</sup> He is linked to the controversy over gradual and sudden enlightenment associated with the so-called council of bSam-yas, an event in which Kamalaśīla is reported to have defeated a Chinese monk in debate and established the dominance of his own gradualist interpretation of the Buddhist path in Tibet.<sup>6</sup> The controversy is described in Kamalaśīla's now well-known work on the stages of meditation

(*Bhāvanākrama*) and is reflected in two other works by Vimalamitra on the same subject: "The meaning of the sudden practice of non-conceptuality" (*Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rlog pa'i bsgom don*) and "The meaning of the gradual practice" (*Rim gyis 'jug pa'i sgom don*).<sup>7</sup> Both Vimalamitra and Kamalaśīla flourished at the end of the eighth century.

At the other end of this brief historical spectrum is Atīśa. Atīśa served as abbot of the monastic college at Vikramaśīla under the reign of two Pāla kings who bridged the late decades of the tenth century and the early decades of the eleventh.<sup>8</sup> In his later years, after he had achieved considerable prominence as a scholar and monastic leader, Atīśa was invited to Tibet to take part in the re-establishment of monastic scholarship associated with the "second diffusion of the Dharma". In collaboration with Rin-chen-bzang-po he translated a number of works of Indian origin. After he had become established in Central Tibet, he wrote an independent work, "The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment" (*Bodhipathapradīpa*), that later served as the source for the analysis of the path now dominant in the *dGe-lugs-pa* school of Tibetan monasticism.<sup>9</sup>

If the lives of these three scholars are any measure, the commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* preserved in the Tibetan Canon are the product of a historical milieu in which a commentator was not simply an isolated scholar, but the bearer of a distinctive lineage of practice, a monastic official, and, as a result, also a political figure. This combination of interests is reflected in the use they made of their commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*. Along with the normal discussion of ontology and metaphysics is a discussion of practice and discipline, matters that would have been of as much concern in the formation of a monastic curriculum as in the adjudication of philosophical disputes. It is often said that the categories of Buddhist philosophy are inseparable from questions of practice, but the connection is seldom as clear as it is in the commentaries produced by these seven commentators on the phrases of the *Heart Sūtra*.

On the level of ontology or metaphysics the comments on the phrase "Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form" reflect the dispute between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophers about the nature of Emptiness. From the time of Bhāvaviveka in the sixth century there had been a running controversy be-

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tween the philosophers of these two schools about the proper way to relate the ontology of one school to the ontology of the other.<sup>10</sup> Mādhyamikas spoke of two truths (or realities), the ultimate and the conventional, and explained that the two truths could be used to strike a balance between extremes. A person could follow a middle path by affirming the reality of things conventionally but denying their reality ultimately. Yogācāra philosophers also sought a position of balance, but expressed it in a concept of three "natures".<sup>11</sup> Things were understood as having three natures or "characteristics", their imagined nature, their dependent nature, and their absolute nature. To avoid the extremes of complete affirmation or denial, the texts of the Yogācāra tradition explained that imagined nature did not exist, absolute nature did exist, and dependent nature (which was the combination of the two) existed insofar as it was absolute and did not exist insofar as it was imagined.

The juxtaposition of these two views of reality yielded many contrasts, but the most important had to do with the existence of absolute nature itself. Did absolute nature exist or not? A Mādhyamika would be content to say that it existed conventionally, but not ultimately; but if the Yogācāra vision of reality was interpreted as meaning that absolute nature existed ultimately, the two schools were at loggerheads. It is this second interpretation of the Yogācāra position that generated Bhāvaviveka's attack on the Yogācāra in the sixth century, and it is this second interpretation that is reflected in the commentaries of the eighth century, particularly in the commentary on the relationship between Emptiness and Form.

The commentator Jñānamitra explains the phrase in a way that is consistent with the position of the Madhyamaka:

Now, in order to define Emptiness he says: "Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form". If one does not understand that what is called "Form" is Emptiness, one is deluded and perceives and conceptualizes Form, or designates [it] with words. To say that [Form] is Emptiness means that the nature of Form is Emptiness. It has no identity in the past, the present, or the future, and cannot be grasped. . . . There is no place for any extreme or any entity. This is why [Form] is called "Emptiness".

"Emptiness is Form" means that Emptiness also cannot be grasped and is designated conventionally as "Form".<sup>12</sup>

What makes this explanation consistent with the explanation we might expect from a Mādhyamika such as Bhāvaviveka is that Jñānamitra makes no attempt to speak of Emptiness as something that exists or remains after concepts have been removed. He explains only that Emptiness is subject to the same analysis as Form, and the application of analysis to the concept of Emptiness then closes the circle: Form is Emptiness, but Emptiness too is empty and is no different from Form.

For an explanation of the passage that makes use of Yogācāra categories we look to the commentary of Śrī Mahājāna:

“Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form” is a brief statement of the objectification [involved] when one thinks about Reality (*tattva*). “Emptiness is not different from Form, and Form is not different Emptiness” is a more extended statement. First of all, when one considers Form, one admits that it is Emptiness. . . . “Emptiness is not different from Form” means that dependent nature, which is the imagination of what is unreal, is empty of imagined duality. To be empty of duality in a sense that leaves its existence intact (*paryudāsa-pratiśedha*) is the nature of Form.<sup>13</sup>

Here Mahājāna uses the standard terminology of the three natures to equate Emptiness with absolute nature that is left behind when the dualities of imagined nature are removed. The point is clinched, for those who know the technical terminology of this controversy, by a term that I have translated as “leaving its existence intact”. The term is *paryudāsa-pratiśedha*, sometimes translated as “nominally bound negation”.<sup>14</sup> By this Śrī Mahājāna means that the negation involved in the claim that Form is empty means only that Form is empty of the dualistic concepts wrongly imposed on it, not that it does not exist at all. This is a basic feature in the Yogācāra understanding of Emptiness. It also is a feature about which Bhāvaviveka, as a Mādhyamika, had many critical things to say.

Someone may wonder why I have quoted two of the lesser known commentators on this passage to illustrate the interpretive approaches of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions, especially when we have commentaries from such respected representatives of the Madhyamaka as Kamalaśīla and Atīśa. The answer to this question reveals something important about

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the commentators themselves. We know from their other writings that Kamalaśīla and Atīśa were aware of the philosophical problems reflected in the dispute between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. Kamalaśīla himself made important contributions to the understanding of this dispute, if not to its solution. We find, however, that Kamalaśīla and Atīśa used their commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* not to promote the cause of Madhyamaka ontology, but to clarify their thinking on a question that was essentially epistemological. They took the text as an occasion to explain how a person could gain a correct understanding of the insight expressed in the phrase “Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form”, and relate that understanding to other stages on the path to enlightenment. Being epistemological, the question was also political in the broad sense of the term. It had to do not just with the ontology of Emptiness, but with *how* a person should study the text and *who* had the authority to establish its interpretation.

Bhāvaviveka dealt with this question in his own way at the end of his argument against the Yogācāra, an argument that is found in his commentary on the *Madhyamakakārikās* and in his compendium of Indian philosophy, the *Tarkajvālā*. He starts the argument with a Yogācāra objection:

It is said in scripture that the ultimate cannot be investigated and is not accessible to logical reasoning (*tarka-gocara*). For this reason, the ultimate cannot be expressed by inference (*anumāna*).

He then gives his own reply:

This is wrong. Inference that follows scripture (*āgama*) negates all concepts and brings about non-conceptual insight. The ultimate, then, is not an object (*viśaya*) of inference. But [inference] has priority, because there is no other way of investigating what is true and false.<sup>15</sup>

In Bhāvaviveka’s system this argument served as a justification for the rationality of the process leading to the ultimate understanding of Emptiness. In the hands of Bhāvaviveka’s intellectual heirs, notably the eighth-century Mādhyamika Jñānagarbha, it led to the definition of ultimate truth as the truth that is consistent with reason.<sup>16</sup>

Kamalaśīla echoes Bhāvaviveka's concern for reason in his commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*. The commentary is not long, but it gives a clear impression of the problem that brought Kamalaśīla to the text. Kamalaśīla says:

By the power of the Buddha, Śāriputra asks Avalokiteśvara how to train. The intent of the question is [to ask] what is achieved by training. What is achieved is certainty. This [certainty] is [gained] through the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). . . . The point of [Avalokiteśvara's] reply is: O Śāriputra, the three-fold assembly of *bodhisattvas* should train with the knowledge that comes from inference whose object is ultimate truth. One does not [train] with perception, because [ultimate truth] is not the object of visual perception, because there is no means of knowledge for which it is an object, and because there is no ability [to produce effective action]. [Furthermore,] one already has trained in yogic perception, and there is no need for [further] training.

One should train [instead] with knowledge that comes from inference about the ultimate. It is through the knowledge that comes from inference that one develops certainty about the Perfection of Wisdom, which is like an illusion and is [identical to] Emptiness.<sup>17</sup>

Kamalaśīla then goes on to describe what he has in mind when he speaks of the inference whose object is ultimate truth:

First, [an effect] does not arise ultimately from any connection with a cause. When analyzed, it is impossible [for an effect to arise from a cause], because it cannot arise from itself, from something else, from both, or from neither. It also is impossible for an effect to arise that either exists or does not exist.<sup>18</sup>

This is Kamalaśīla's only attempt to explain the meaning of Emptiness in this brief commentary. Someone who comes to the text in search of a new interpretation of the phrase "Form is Emptiness" is bound to be disappointed. But the passage does tell a great deal about the context in which Kamalaśīla thought the interpretation of the *Sūtra* should be made. It was a context dominated by the rules of rational analysis.

Atīśa's commentary also focuses on an epistemological problem, but not specifically on the role of reason. He uses his considerable professorial ingenuity to explain how the *Heart*

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*Sūtra* reflects, in its cryptic phrases, a complex system of discipline that governs the progress of a *bodhisattva* toward Buddhahood. He places the phrase "Form is Emptiness" in the middle of the Path of Vision (*darśana-mārga*), the third of the five paths used in the *Abhisamayālamkāra* and later works to outline the path as a whole. His ingenuity is perhaps most apparent in his explanation of the word "therefore" in the fifth section of the text. Atīśa takes the word in its temporal sense, meaning "after that" or "subsequently", and understands it as a reference to the whole Path of Practice (*bhāvanā-mārga*)—a reference, in other words, to the last nine of the ten *bodhisattva* stages (*bhūmi*).

I could cite more examples of Atīśa's attempt to squeeze oceans of meaning from the simplest phrases. But perhaps it is best to return instead to one of the questions with which I began this essay. Why would Kamalaśīla and Atīśa write such commentaries at all? I think it is not too far-fetched to think that behind Kamalaśīla's defence of reason, and Atīśa's imaginative attempt to see in the *Heart Sūtra* the system of a graded path of study, there lies a problem of authority, a problem that was sharpened by the conciseness and simplicity of the text itself. The *sūtra* is attractive precisely because it reduces the complexity of the path to a few simple concepts. It is the kind of text that is particularly susceptible to a form of interpretation that emphasizes the suddenness and simplicity of enlightenment. To seminary deans and monastic officials like Kamalaśīla and Atīśa this simplicity presented a challenge. They seem to have felt a need to pull in the reins and insist that the study of Emptiness can only be contextualized or institutionalized in a system of rational and orderly study.

What was the source of the challenge? The presence of Vimalamitra in the list of commentators on the *sūtra* gives us one possible answer. Vimalamitra was a Tantric master who defended a form of practice known as "the sudden practice of non-conceptuality". When Atīśa's commentary is compared to Vimalamitra's, it is clear that Atīśa had Vimalamitra very much in mind. Atīśa does not spend much time actually refuting Vimalamitra. What he does instead is place Vimalamitra's comments in the context of his own conception of the path, as if to say that Vimalamitra's remarks about the *Heart Sūtra* are acceptable as far as they go, but have to be placed in the right system of



study before they can properly be understood. Kamalaśīla also was an enthusiastic defender of the gradual and systematic pursuit of enlightenment. We might very well imagine that Kamalaśīla and Atīśa wrote their commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* in response to a challenge that stemmed from Tantric exegesis, like the exegesis found in Vimalamitra. But this should not be understood as meaning that Kamalaśīla and Atīśa harbored any deep antipathy to the Tantric tradition as such. They both were practitioners of Tantra and recognized the validity of the Tantric tradition in its own sphere. What they resisted was an interpretation of the *Heart Sūtra* that either slighted the claims of reason or collapsed the system of categories that made of the vast corpus of Perfection of Wisdom Literature a graded path to enlightenment.

Regardless of the immediate cause that provoked Kamalaśīla and Atīśa to compose their commentaries, it is clear that we have in the corpus of Indian commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* more than just an analysis of the ontological problems that in other contexts so occupied the minds of Mahāyāna philosophers. The commentaries also give us a glimpse of the politics of interpretation that concerned this small group of philosophers in their other roles as teachers, monastic officials, and defenders of a tradition of authoritative interpretation.

#### NOTES

1. E. Conze, "Prašāstrasena's Ārya-Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-ṭīkā," in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, ed. L. Cousins et al. (Dordrecht: 1974) 51–61.
2. S. Beal, trans., *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (1884; reprint ed. Delhi: 1969) vol. 2, 223–225.
3. As G. Schopen has shown in "The Phrase 'sa prthivīpradeśas caityabhūto bhavel' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975) 147–181.
4. The seven commentaries make up Otani nos. 5217–5223 of *The Peking Tibetan Tripitaka (PTT)*. References to the commentaries in this article are based on the reprint edition of the Peking Tibetan Tripitaka (Tokyo and Kyoto: 1957), volume 94, folios 285–350.
5. As has been pointed out by D.S. Ruegg in *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India* (Wiesbaden: 1981) 107.
6. L.O. Gomez, "Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment,"

ment," in W. Lai and L.R. Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley 1983) 393–434.

7. The first *Bhāvanākrama* is edited by G. Tucci in *Minor Buddhist Texts II (Serie Orientale Roma 9)* (1958) 185–229, the third *Bhāvanākrama* in *Minor Buddhist Texts III (Serie Orientale Roma 43)* (1971). Vimalamitra's works are found in *The Peking Tibetan Tripitaka*, Otani nos. 5306 and 5334.

8. H. Eimer, *Berichte über das Leben des Atīśa (Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna)*, (Wiesbaden: 1977), and *Rnam Thar Rgyas Pa: Materialien zu einer Biographie des Atīśa (Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna)* 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: 1979).

9. H. Eimer, *Bodhipathapradīpa: Ein Lehrgedicht des Atīśa (Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna) in der tibetischen Überlieferung* (Wiesbaden: 1978).

10. An early version of the controversy is found in M.D. Eckel, "Bhāvaviveka's Critique of Yogācāra Philosophy in Chapter XXV of the *Prajñāpradīpa*," in C. Lindtner, ed., *Miscellanea Buddhica* (Copenhagen: 1985) 25–75. For a later version of the same controversy see M.D. Eckel, *Jñānagarbha's Commentary on the Distinction Between the Two Truths* (Albany: 1986).

11. This brief summary of the positions of both schools is based on Bhāvaviveka's outline of the argument. Bhāvaviveka based his own presentation of the Yogācāra position on such early Yogācāra texts as the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, but he recast the position in a way that highlighted the differences between the two schools.

12. *PTT*, vol. 94, 305a/6–305b/2.

13. *PTT*, vol. 94, 344b/8–345a/4.

14. B.K. Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis* (The Hague: 1971) 162–165. The distinction between *pariyudāsa pratīśedha* and its opposite (*prasajya pratīśedha*) is discussed in a number of works on Mahāyāna philosophy. See, for example, my "Bhāvaviveka's Critique," 71 and *Jñānagarbha's Commentary*, 126. The most complete explanation of the concept is still Y. Kajiyama's *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy: An Annotated Translation of the Text of the Tarkabhāṣā of Mokṣākaragupta* (Kyoto: 1966) 38–39. On the idea that the negation "leaving existence intact" see G.M. Nagao, "What Remains" in *Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness*, in M. Kiyota, ed., *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: 1978) 66–82.

15. The translation is adapted from my "Bhāvaviveka's Critique," pp. 73–74. The argument is repeated at the end of Bhāvaviveka's response to the Yogācāra in the fifth chapter of the *Tarkajvālā*. An edition and translation of the chapter by Lindtner and myself is in preparation.

16. Eckel, *Jñānagarbha's Commentary*, 71.

17. *PTT*, vol. 94, 331b/8–332b/3.

18. The first argument against the ultimate arising of things is found in the first chapter of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* and throughout the subsequent Madhyamaka tradition. The second argument is mentioned by Atīśa in the *Bodhipathapradīpa* as one of the four great proofs of Emptiness. See Eimer, *Bodhipathapradīpa*, 128–9. English translation in R. Sherburne, trans., *A Lamp for the Path and Commentary by Atīśa* (London: 1983), 136.

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## I. ARTICLES

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## The *Heart Sūtra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?

by Jan Nattier

### *Introduction*

The *Heart Sūtra*<sup>1</sup> is surely one of the best loved Buddhist scriptures in all of East Asia. Esteemed both as a concise summary of some of the key doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism and as a *dhāraṇī* of immense supernatural power, it has been revered by lay people and clerics alike as one of the pinnacles of Buddhist teaching. It has been valued by monastic scholars of a variety of sectarian persuasions, as attested by the wealth of commentaries on the text from such diverse perspectives as Yogācāra, Mādhyamika, and Ch'an. And the tenacity of the mass appeal of this *sūtra* is attested by the fact that in contemporary Japan the *Heart Sūtra* has been printed on more teacups, hand towels and neckties than has any other Buddhist scripture.

Nor has the *Heart Sūtra* been overlooked by modern Buddhist scholars. Considerable attention has been devoted to the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra* by Edward Conze,<sup>2</sup> while the Chinese versions of the text have been the object of a vast number of studies by Japanese scholars, most recently (and most notably) by FUKUI Fumimasa.<sup>3</sup> Likewise the canonical Tibetan version of the text and the importance of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries have been brought into the purview of modern scholarship by the recent work of Donald Lopez,<sup>4</sup> while Indian and Chinese commentaries on the *sūtra* have been the subject of studies by David Eckel and John McRae, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, it would be fair to say that few students enrolled in introductory courses on Buddhism in American universities have escaped without some encounter with the *Heart Sūtra*, for its pithy undermining of all previous categories of Buddhist analysis ("form is emptiness, emptiness is form" and so on) has earned it a place in

virtually every anthology of Buddhist literature. This text is, in short, one of the most familiar pieces of Buddhist writing both in traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist societies and in modern academic circles.

Yet it may be our very familiarity with this scripture that has inhibited our ability to gain a clear picture of its ancestry. Modern scholars and modern Buddhists have read, heard and chanted the *sūtra* so frequently that its form and content no longer seem strange to us. Yet this brief scripture contains a number of peculiar features (to be examined in detail below) that can provide us with important clues to the circumstances of its origin.

But it is not only such overexposure to its content that has prevented modern scholars from undertaking a thorough re-evaluation of this important text. An additional factor has been the understandable propensity of Buddhist specialists to approach the text either in its Sanskrit versions (with occasional reference to the recensions preserved in Chinese) or in its Chinese editions (with more or less adequate references to the corresponding passages in the Sanskrit). There have been, in other words, numerous intra-Sanskrit and intra-Chinese studies of the *sūtra*, but no rigorously comparative – and cross-lingual – analysis of the text.

The present study is intended to remedy both of these deficiencies, first by approaching the *Heart Sūtra* within its literary setting (both as a member of the category of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general and, more specifically, as a text belonging to the Prajñāpāramitā class), and second by engaging in a thorough comparative examination of all the earliest versions of the text, both in Chinese and in Sanskrit. By doing so we will be able to bring into focus not only the peculiar features of this all-too-familiar text, but also the clues it contains – all plainly visible in retrospect – to the time and the place of its composition.

### **The Heart Sūtra: The Short Recension**

The *Heart Sūtra* exists in two recensions: a shorter (and earlier) recension, which will be the main object of our attention here, and a longer recension, known in Indian and Tibetan versions as well as in several relatively late Chinese translations. The relative dating of

these texts will be discussed in detail below; for the moment, our main concern is to gain an overview of the form and content of the text.

The shorter *Heart Sūtra* consists of three sections: (1) a brief introduction, in which the perspective of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara on the emptiness of the five *skandhas* (based on his practice of the Perfection of Wisdom) is introduced; (2) a core, in which Avalokiteśvara (the implied speaker, though his name does not appear in this section) addresses a series of observations to the elder (*sthavira*) Śāriputra, beginning with the well-known affirmation of the non-difference between form and emptiness and culminating in a series of negations countering virtually all the most basic categories of Buddhist analysis of the person, the nature of causality, and the path; and (3) a conclusion, in which the *bodhisattva* who relies on the Perfection of Wisdom is described, the Perfection of Wisdom is touted as the basis for the enlightenment of all *buddhas*, and the well-known mantra (*gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā*) is recommended as a means to eliminating all suffering. The *sūtra* concludes with the mantra itself, which in all non-Sanskrit versions of the text is maintained in its Indian form (that is, it is transliterated rather than translated).

The brevity of the *sūtra* makes it possible for us to include here a complete English translation of the shorter Sanskrit recension, which will serve as a point of reference for the analysis given below.

**INTRODUCTION:** The *bodhisattva* Noble Avalokiteśvara, practicing [his] practice in the profound Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), looked down (*vyavalokayatisma*). [And] he regarded the five *skandhas* as empty.

### **CORE:**

Here, Śāriputra, form is empty; emptiness itself is form. Form is not distinct from emptiness; emptiness is not distinct from form.<sup>5a</sup> And the same goes for sensation (*vedanā*), concept (*saṃjñā*), conditioning force (*saṃskāra*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*).

Here, Śāriputra, all *dharmas* have the mark of emptiness. They are non-originated, non-extinct, non-defiled, non-pure, non-decreasing, non-increasing.

Therefore, Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no concept, no conditioning forces, no consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or] mind; no form, sound, scent, taste, touch-object [or] mind-object (*dharma*); no eye-realm (*caḥsur-dhātu*) and so on up to no realm of mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna-dhātu*); no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance and so on up to no old-age-and-death and no destruction of old-age-and-death. There is no suffering, arising [of suffering], extinction [of suffering], or path; no knowledge (*jñāna*) and no attainment (*prāpti*).

**CONCLUSION:** Therefore, Śāriputra, because there is no attainment the *bodhisattva* dwells in reliance on the Perfection of Wisdom, without mental obstruction (*cittāvaraṇa*). Because there is no mental obstruction he is unafraid, has passed beyond error, and [his] destination is nirvāṇa (*niṣṭhā-nirvāṇa*).

All the Buddhas of the three times have awakened (*abhisambuddha*) to unexcelled perfect enlightenment (*anuttara-samyaksambodhi*) by relying on the Perfection of Wisdom.

Therefore the great mantra of the Perfection of Wisdom is to be known: the great spell (*vidyā*) mantra, the supreme mantra, the mantra which is equal to the unequalled, the mantra which appeases all suffering. Because it is true, not false (*satyam amithyatvāt* [sic]), the mantra is spoken in the Perfection of Wisdom.

It goes as follows (*tadyathā*): *gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā*.

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Viewing this brief *sūtra* within its literary context – that is, as a member of the Mahāyāna *sūtra* category and, more specifically, as a Prajñāpāramitā text – one immediately observes a number of peculiar features. First, of course, is the very fact of its brevity: as compared with Mahāyāna scriptures in general the *Heart Sūtra* is an extremely short text. This feature is not, however, unique, as there are a few other Mahāyāna texts of comparable length, particularly within the Prajñāpāramitā category, where Conze has labeled a whole group of such *sūtras* (virtually all of relatively late composition) as “abbreviations” of earlier texts.<sup>6</sup>

More important for our purposes are two further features which are far more unexpected in a Mahāyāna scripture: first, that the *sūtra* lacks a proper opening (that is, the requisite formula “Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord was staying at ...,” specifying the location and circumstances of its preaching)<sup>7</sup> and second, that it lacks a proper conclusion (in which some reference to the reaction of the audience is generally made). A third and most unexpected peculiarity is the fact that the Buddha himself makes no appearance whatsoever in this *sūtra* – a defect that is perfunctorily remedied in the longer recension of the text, but appeared not to concern the compilers of the shorter version.

When we approach the *Heart Sūtra* not merely as a representative of the Mahāyāna class of *sūtras*, but more specifically as a Prajñāpāramitā text, a fourth peculiar feature comes into focus. For the main (and indeed only) speaker in this *sūtra* is the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, who generally plays no role at all in the Prajñāpāramitā literature.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, completely absent from the *Heart Sūtra* is Subhūti, the main interlocutor in all of the earliest Prajñāpāramitā texts. The cast of characters, in other words, is not at all what we would expect, for both the Buddha himself and Subhūti are entirely missing, while a seeming interloper, the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, has been awarded the only speaking part. The name of the *sthavira* Śāriputra does appear in the *Heart Sūtra*, as in the main body of Prajñāpāramitā texts, but only as the listener addressed by Avalokiteśvara in this text. This is not, however – as we shall see below – a coincidence, for this passage has an exact parallel in

another Prajñāpāramitā text.

A fifth and final feature that sets the *Heart Sūtra* apart, if not from the Prajñāpāramitā literature as a whole (for certain other relatively late scriptures in that category share this feature) but from the earliest and most widely used texts in this category, is the presence of a mantra at the conclusion of the text. We have already noted that it is peculiar for a Mahāyāna *sūtra* to end with anything other than a reference to the reaction of the Buddha's listeners; it is particularly unusual for such a text to end, quite abruptly, with a mantra. For while the Prajñāpāramitā literature is not utterly lacking in such formulas, they play a relatively limited role in texts of this kind, and when they first appear in this literature they are labeled not mantras but *dhāraṇīs*, a term referring (in this early usage) to mnemonic devices rather than inherently salvific or protective formulas.<sup>9</sup> The very presence, in other words, of a mantra in a Prajñāpāramitā text – let alone the highlighting of such a mantra by allowing it to stand alone as the *sūtra*'s conclusion – is a feature that demands our attention.

The *Heart Sūtra*, then, contains a number of features that are unusual in a scripture of its kind. These suggest, at the very least, that the circumstances of its composition may have differed notably from those that led to the production of the more extensive Prajñāpāramitā texts. Our task at this point, therefore, will be to attempt to determine where and under what circumstances this unusual text was produced.

### The Heart Sūtra and the Large Sūtra<sup>10</sup>

The single most important clue to the origins of the *Heart Sūtra* is provided by yet another peculiarity of this text: the fact that the core section – from the declaration to Śāriputra that form is not other than emptiness, and vice versa, to the statement that in emptiness there is “no knowledge and no attainment” – is virtually identical to a passage in another Prajñāpāramitā text. As scholars of East Asian Buddhism have long been aware, the central section (that is, all but the opening and closing lines) of the *Heart Sūtra* matches a passage in the *Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom* (Ch. *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching*,<sup>1</sup> Skt. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)

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almost character for character.<sup>11</sup>

The extent of this resemblance is so great that it can be recognized even by the non-Sinologist through a simple juxtaposition of the core passage as contained in these two texts:

*Large Sūtra*, trans. Kumārajīva  
(T. No. 223, 8.223a13-20)

*Heart Sūtra*, attributed to Hsüan-tsang  
(T. No. 251, 8.848c4-10)

舍利弗

舍利子

色不異空空不異色

色不異空空不異色

色即是空空即是色

色即是空空即是色

受想行識亦如是

受想行識亦復如是

舍利弗

舍利子

是諸法空相

是諸法空相

不生不滅

不生不滅

不垢不淨

不垢不淨

不增不減

不增不減

是空法非過去非未來非現在

——

是故空中無色無受無想行識

是故空中無色無受無想行識

無眼耳鼻舌身意

無眼耳鼻舌身意

無色聲香味觸法

無色聲香味觸法

無眼界乃至無意識界

無眼界乃至無意識界

亦無無明亦無無明盡

無無明亦無無明盡

乃至亦無老死亦無老死盡

乃至無老死亦無老死盡

無苦集滅道

無苦集滅道

亦無智亦無得

無智亦無得



Such word-for-word agreement cannot possibly be coincidental. It seems necessary to conclude – unless we assume that both texts are based on a common but unattested ancestor – that one of these texts must be patterned directly on the other.

When we turn to the Sanskrit version of the *Heart Sūtra*, its resemblance to its Chinese counterpart (and, accordingly, to the corresponding passage in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* as well) is again very striking. Indeed it would be fair to say that there is a virtual word-for-word correspondence between the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, in the critical edition published by Edward Conze, and the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang. An English translation of the core passage as contained in these two versions of the *Heart Sūtra* clearly illustrates their similarities:

Chinese Heart Sūtra

Śāriputra,

Form is not different from emptiness,  
emptiness is not different  
from form.

Form itself is emptiness,  
emptiness itself is form.

Śāriputra,

All *dharma*s are marked by  
emptiness:  
[They are] not originated,  
Not extinguished,  
Not defiled,  
Not pure,  
Not increasing,  
Not decreasing.

Therefore in emptiness there is  
no form, no sensation, no concept,  
conditioning force, [or]  
consciousness;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or]  
mind;

No form, sound, smell, taste,  
touch-object  
[or] mind-object (*dharma*);

Sanskrit Heart Sūtra

Here, Śāriputra,

Form is empty, emptiness itself is form.<sup>12</sup>

Form is not distinct from emptiness,  
emptiness is not distinct  
from form.

[That which is form is emptiness,  
that which is emptiness is form.<sup>12a</sup>]

Here, Śāriputra,

All *dharma*s have the mark of  
emptiness:<sup>13</sup>  
[They are] non-originated,  
Non-extinct,  
Non-defiled,  
Non-pure,  
Non-decreasing,  
Non-increasing.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, Śāriputra, in emptiness there  
is no form, no sensation, no concept,  
no conditioning forces, no  
consciousness;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or]  
mind;

No form, sound, smell, taste,  
touch-object  
[or] mind-object (*dharma*);

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No eye-realm (and so on up to) no  
realm of mind-consciousness;  
And no ignorance and no destruction  
of ignorance;  
(And so on up to) no old-age-and-  
death [and] no destruction of  
old-age-and-death;  
There is no suffering, arising  
[of suffering], extinction  
[of suffering], [or] path;  
No wisdom and no attainment.

No eye-realm (and so on up to) no  
realm of mind-consciousness;  
No ignorance, no destruction  
of ignorance;  
(And so on up to) no old-age-and-  
death [and] no destruction of  
old-age-and-death;  
There is no suffering, arising  
[of suffering], extinction  
[of suffering], [or] path;  
No wisdom [and] no attainment.

The two texts are thus so similar that either could be construed as a translation of the other.

The Problem of the Sanskrit Large Sūtra

When we turn to the Sanskrit version of the *Large Sūtra*, however, the pattern of word-for-word correspondence that we have observed so far breaks down. If we compare the core passage of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* with its counterpart in the *Large Sūtra* (that is, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, here transcribed from the Gilgit manuscript copy, in which certain features of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit are evident<sup>15</sup>) a general similarity in content – that is, in the ideas and their sequence – is evident. Yet a comparison of the two Sanskrit texts reveals a degree of divergence great enough to be evident even to those who are not Sanskrit specialists:

Sanskrit Large Sūtra

na hi Śāradvaīputra-<sup>16</sup>

—  
-anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā<sup>18</sup>  
nānya śūnyatānyad rūpam  
[rū]pam eva śūnyatā  
śūnyat(ai)va rūpam  
evam nā(ny)ā vedanānyā śūnyatā ·  
nānya saṃjñā nānyā śūnyatā ·  
nānye saṃskārā anye śūnyatā ·  
nānya vijñānam anyā śūnyatā ·  
nānyaḥ śūnyatānyad vijñānam

Sanskrit Heart Sūtra

iha Śāriputra  
rūpam śūnyam<sup>17</sup> śūnyataiva rūpam  
rūpān na pṛthag śūnyatā  
śūnyatāya na pṛthag rūpam  
[yad rūpam sā śūnyatā  
ya śūnyatā tad rūpam<sup>19</sup>]  
evam eva vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāra-  
vijñānam

vijñānam eva śūnyatā śūnyataiva  
vijñānam ·  
ya Śāradvaūputra śūnyatā

na sā utpadyate  
na nirudhyate ·  
na saṃkliśyate  
na vyavadāyate ·  
na hīyate  
na vardhate ·

nāūtā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā<sup>20</sup>  
yā notpadyate na nirudhyate na  
saṃkliśyate na vyavadāyate na  
hīyate na vardhate nāūtā  
nānāgatā na pratyutpannāḥ

na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā na  
na saṃjñānā na saṃskārān  
na vijñānaṃ  
na cakṣur na śrotraṃ na ghrāṇaṃ  
na jihvā na kāye na manaḥ  
na rūpaṃ na śabda na gandho na rasa  
na sparśo na dharmāḥ

(na) tatra skandhā na dhātavo  
nāyatanāni  
na tatra cakṣudhātu na rūpadhātu  
na cakṣuvijñānadhātu  
na (śro)tradhātu na śabdadhātu  
na śrotravijñānadhātuḥ  
na ghrāṇadhātu na gandhadhātu  
na ghrāṇavijñānadhātu  
na jihvadhātu na rasadhātu  
na jihvavijñānadhātuḥ  
na kāyadhātu na spraṣṭavyadhātu  
na kāyavijñānadhātu  
na manodhātu na dharmadhātu  
na manovijñāna(dhā)tuḥ [sic]  
na tatrāvidyā nāvidyānirodhaḥ  
na saṃskārān na saṃskānirodhaḥ  
na vijñānaṃ na vijñānirodhaḥ  
na nāmarūpaṃ na nāmarūpanirodhaḥ  
na satvāyatanam<sup>23</sup> na

iha Śāriputra sarva-dharmāḥ śūnyatā-  
lakṣaṇā  
anutpannā  
aniruddha  
amalā  
avimalā  
anūnā  
aparipūrṇāḥ

tasmāc Chāriputra śūnyatāyām na  
rūpaṃ na vedanā  
na saṃjñā na saṃskārāḥ  
na vijñānaṃ  
na cakṣuḥ-śrotra-ghrāṇa-jihvā-kāya-  
manāṃsi  
na rūpa-śabda-gandha-rasa-  
spraṣṭavya<sup>21</sup>-dharmāḥ

na cakṣur<sup>22</sup>-dhātu yāvan  
na manovijñāna-dhātuḥ

nāvidyā nāvidyā-kṣayo

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satvāyatananirodhaḥ  
na sparśo (na) sparśanirodhaḥ  
na vedanā na vedānirodhaḥ  
na ṛṣṇā na ṛṣṇānirodhaḥ  
nopādānaṃ nopādānirodhaḥ  
na bhavo na bhavanirodhaḥ  
na jāti(r n)a jātinirodhaḥ  
na jarāmaraṇaṃ yāvan na jarāmaraṇaṃ  
na jarāmarānirodhaḥ na jarāmarāṇakṣayo  
na duḥkhaṃ na samudayo na nirodho na duḥkha-samudaya-nirodha-mārga  
na mārgaḥ  
na prāpti nābhisamayaḥ<sup>24</sup> na jñānaṃ na prāptir

There are a number of obvious discrepancies between these two versions, of which the most evident is the greater length of the *Large Sūtra* relative to the *Heart Sūtra*. This is due, however, not to the presence in the *Large Sūtra* of ideas or images that are altogether absent from the *Heart Sūtra*, but merely to the greater thoroughness of the *Large Sūtra* in spelling out in detail categories that are related in a more summary form in the *Heart Sūtra*. The *Large Sūtra*, for example, is not content simply to declare that “form is not one thing and emptiness another” (na ... anyad rūpaṃ anyā śūnyatā), but goes on to repeat the same formula for each of the remaining four *skandhas* (“sensation is not one thing and emptiness another” and so on). The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, states simply that the same is true of the other *skandhas* as well (evam eva vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāra-vijñānaṃ). Likewise when the *Large Sūtra* declares that in emptiness there is no eye, no ear, and so forth, it does so by enumerating each of the eighteen *dhātus* individually, while the *Heart Sūtra* simply lists the first twelve elements in the list (that is, the sense-organs and their respective objects) in streamlined fashion and then summarizes the remaining *dhātus* in abbreviated form (“no eye-realm and so forth up to no mind-consciousness-realm,” Skt. na cakṣur-dhātu yāvan na manovijñāna-dhātuḥ). The *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, contains all the same elements that are found in the *Large Sūtra*, but simply expresses them in as concise a fashion as possible.<sup>25</sup>

More peculiar than these discrepancies, however, are divergences of a second type, in which the general meaning of the two texts

is the same but the vocabulary they employ is not. Two representative examples are the following:

Large Sūtra

(*na*) *anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā*  
*nānya śūnyatānyad rūpam*

*na jarāmaraṇam*  
*na jarāmaraṇanīrodhaḥ*

Heart Sūtra

*rūpān na prthak śūnyatā*  
*śūnyatāyā na prthag rūpam*

*yāvan na jarāmaraṇam*  
*na jarāmaraṇakṣaya*

In both of these cases we have statements that are fully synonymous, but contain distinct (and quite unrelated) vocabulary. In the first example the *Large Sūtra* reads “form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form” using the Sanskrit expression *na anya X anya Y*, that is, “X is not other than Y” (literally “not other X other Y”). The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, employs the expression *X na prthak Y*, that is, “Y is not distinct from X” (lit. “from-X not distinct Y,” in which item X appears in the ablative case). The two texts are thus essentially identical in meaning, but they differ noticeably in wording. Similarly, in the second example both texts assert that “there is no old-age-and death” (*na jarāmaraṇam*); the *Large Sūtra*, however, goes on to state that there is no “extinction” (or “stopping,” Skt. *nīrodha*) of old-age-and-death, while the *Heart Sūtra* uses instead the Sanskrit term *kṣaya* (“destruction”). Once again the essential meaning is the same, but the manner of expression is different.

An even more vivid example of the divergence between these two texts may be found in the well known passage describing the nature of *dharma*s characterized by emptiness. Here the parallels are the following:

Large Sūtra  
*na ... utpadyate*  
*na nirudhyate*  
*na saṃkliśyate*

Heart Sūtra  
*anutpannā*  
*aniruddhā*  
*amalā*

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*na vyavadāyate*  
*na hīyate*  
*na vardhate*

*avimalā*  
*anūnā*  
*aparipūrṇā*

In this sequence the *Large Sūtra* employs singular verbal forms throughout:

[It] does not originate (*na ... utpadyate*), is not extinguished (*na nirudhyate*), is not defiled (*na saṃkliśyate*), is not purified (*na vyavadāyate*), does not decrease (*na hīyate*), does not increase (*na vardhate*).

The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, uses plural adjectival forms:

[They] are non-originated (*anutpannā*), non-extinct (*aniruddhā*), non-defiled (*amalā*), non-pure (*avimalā*), non-decreasing (*anūnā*), non-increasing (*aparipūrṇā*).

Not only are the terms themselves different in these two renditions; their grammatical forms (verbs vs. adjectives, singulars vs. plurals) do not agree. The wording thus could not be more different, though the overall meaning is the same.<sup>26</sup>

These two types of divergences – the repetitive style of the *Large Sūtra* vs. the conciseness of the *Heart Sūtra*, on the one hand, and their differences in vocabulary and grammatical categories on the other – offer in turn two very different kinds of evidence concerning the respective histories of these texts. To begin with the first, it is well known that Indian Mahāyāna texts were subject to continual elaboration and expansion, culminating (in the case of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature) in such literary monstrosities as the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Lines* (*Śata-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*), whose considerable bulk is due mainly to its endless repetitions. A text that was originally as short and compact as the *Heart Sūtra* (or rather, its core) could easily have grown, via this gradual process of literary elaboration, into what we see in the *Large Sūtra*.

Yet we must stop at this point and remind ourselves that the

*Heart Sūtra* was considered by Edward Conze, the foremost Western scholar of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, to be *later*, not earlier, than the *Large Sūtra*, and to represent a condensation (not a prototype) of the larger text.<sup>27</sup> And the evidence offered by the Chinese and Tibetan sources would seem to confirm Conze's hypothesis. While the *Large Sūtra* had been translated into Chinese by the end of the 3rd century CE, the *Heart Sūtra* makes its appearance much later, in the 5th century CE at the earliest and quite possibly not until the 7th.<sup>28</sup> Likewise the extant Indian commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* (which have not survived in their Sanskrit originals, but are preserved in Tibetan translation) date only from the 8th to the 11th centuries,<sup>29</sup> while commentaries on the *Large Sūtra* appear several centuries earlier.<sup>30</sup> It seems clear, therefore, that we must follow Conze's lead in considering the *Large Sūtra* to be considerably older than the *Heart Sūtra*. Thus what needs to be explained here is not the development from a shorter text to a longer one (a process quite usual in the history of Indian Buddhist literature), but the reverse.

But how are we to get from the *Large Sūtra*, with its extensive and repetitive language, to the crisp and abbreviated formulations of the *Heart Sūtra*? We could, of course, assume (as Conze has done) that the *Heart Sūtra* was intended as a summary of the overall contents of the earlier Prajñāpāramitā literature, and as such represents a deliberate act of abbreviation on the part of some unknown Indian author. This hypothesis seems quite reasonable at first, even though it runs counter to the usual Indian practice of expanding (not contracting) Buddhist texts. Yet the absolute parallelism in the sequence of ideas between the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* – not to mention the word-for-word agreement in the Chinese versions of the two texts – makes it clear that the *Heart Sūtra* is not an "abbreviation" of the Prajñāpāramitā literature in general; it is built around a specific passage found in the *Large Sūtra*, with additional introductory and concluding material. Our problem, therefore, is to come up with a sequence of literary evolution that could lead from the expansive text found in the *Large Sūtra* to the concise formulations of the *Heart Sūtra*.

At this point we must return to the second type of divergence

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discussed above: the difference in vocabulary found in the two Sanskrit texts, despite the fact that the ideas they contain (and their sequence) are identical. To get from the Sanskrit text of the *Large Sūtra* to the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, we must not only posit the emergence of an abbreviated style from an elaborate one; we must also account for the substitution of adjectives for verbs, plurals for singulars, and synonyms (e.g., *kṣaya* for *nirodha*) for certain Buddhist technical terms.

If the evolution from a longer text to a shorter one is mildly (but not insuperably) problematic, these differences in vocabulary comprise an obstacle of an altogether different order. For such changes simply do not follow the normal rules of textual emendation. While an Indian editor might add (or far less commonly, subtract) certain expressions and terms when transmitting an existing text, to *change* virtually every word in the text (aside from certain fixed technical terminology, such as the names of the five *skandhas*, the eighteen *dhātus*, and the four noble truths) while adding no new conceptual input is, at least in this writer's experience, unheard of. We can identify, in other words, neither a motive nor a precedent for the kinds of changes we see when comparing the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* to its parallel passage in the *Large Sūtra*. To put it succinctly: there is no straightforward way to derive the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, or vice versa.

#### *Textual Transmission: A Re-Analysis*

How, then, are we to explain the virtual identity of these two texts in their Chinese translations? The usual (and understandable) assumption has been that the path of transmission is from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* to the Chinese *Large Sūtra*, and from the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* to the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*. To approach the problem in this way, however, means that we would have to explain the identical appearance of the two Chinese texts via convergence: i.e., that they were either accidentally or deliberately brought into harmony. To further incorporate into our explanation the exact correlation in wording between the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, we would have to concoct a hypothesis that goes something

like this: Sometime after the completion of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Large Sūtra* into Chinese, the *Heart Sūtra* was translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang. At this point a Chinese editor noticed a certain similarity between the core of the *Heart Sūtra* and a passage in the *Large Sūtra*. In order to make the two texts match, he altered one of the two (either the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva or the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang) to bring it into conformity with the other. No similar emendation was made, however, in the text of the earlier translations of the *Large Sūtra*.

Such a hypothesis is, however, intolerably convoluted, and requires us to posit a set of literary processes that are unattested elsewhere (to the best of my knowledge) in Chinese Buddhist textual history. And it goes without saying that the odds against two virtually identical Chinese translations of this core passage (one in the *Large Sūtra*, the other in the *Heart Sūtra*) being produced independently – especially given the evidence that the underlying Sanskrit versions were not identical – are astronomical. But if we accept the standard assumption that the ancestor of the Chinese *Large Sūtra* is the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and that the ancestor of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* is the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, there is simply no other way to account for the evidence. I would suggest, therefore, that we discard this assumption and begin again at the beginning, taking the earliest texts as our starting point.

When we compare the passage in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* (in particular, the earliest extant version, found in the manuscript copy discovered at Gilgit) with its counterpart in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva, the two agree almost perfectly – provided we assume that Kumārajīva indulged in a certain degree of textual condensation in the course of his translation. But this is precisely what we would expect of a Chinese translator, and in particular of Kumārajīva, who is renowned for having produced translations of Indian Buddhist texts capable of appealing to Chinese aesthetic sensibilities. In the Chinese literary world one of the greatest offenses is to be repetitious, for succinctness – not effusive reiteration – is seen as a virtue in Chinese aesthetic theory (precisely the opposite of Indian preferences).<sup>31</sup> The differences between the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and its

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Chinese counterpart are thus exactly what we would expect, given both what is generally known concerning Chinese literary preferences and what we can actually observe in other Chinese Buddhist texts.<sup>32</sup> There is no difficulty, therefore, in positing a line of transmission from a version of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* resembling the extant editions to the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva.

The next step in our analysis, while perhaps somewhat unexpected (at least by scholars whose orientation is primarily Indological), seems to be required by the degree of similarity between the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva and the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang: we must assume that the core of the latter – as East Asian Buddhist scholars have long been aware – is an excerpt from the former.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, consists of an excerpt from the Chinese *Large Sūtra*, together with certain “frame” elements (the opening and closing sections) that have no parallel in the larger text.

So far, then, we have succeeded in establishing the sequence Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* → Chinese *Large Sūtra* → Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, with no step of this process offering any difficulty. But how are we to fit the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* into this scheme? The answer is as compelling as it is startling: *the Sanskrit Heart Sūtra is a translation from the Chinese*.

Such a seemingly heretical assertion requires strong supporting evidence. Such evidence, however, is readily available. We may approach the problem from two angles: first, the evidence for this direction of transmission found within the texts themselves; and second, the historical possibility (and plausibility) of such a transaction.

#### *Internal Evidence: How to Spot a Back-Translation*

Before proceeding with our analysis of the Chinese and Sanskrit versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, it may be useful to consider an instance of back-translation (that is, the reconstruction of Sanskrit terms from another Buddhist language) found in another context. Numerous examples of such back-translations can be found in the Mongolian Buddhist canon, the result of a long-standing Mongolian

preference for Indian loan words rather than the translated expressions preferred by the Tibetans. When, during and after the Yüan dynasty (1280-1368), the Mongols came under strong Tibetan influence and began to translate voluminous quantities of Tibetan Buddhist texts into Mongolian, they were faced with the task of either finding appropriate Indian-based equivalents for Tibetan Buddhist terms or capitulating to the Tibetan procedure and simply translating these terms into Mongolian. Especially in the case of personal and place names, the Mongols tried – wherever possible – to reconstruct the corresponding Indian original.

The result, of course, was a combination of correct and incorrect guesses on the part of the Mongols as to what the original Sanskrit form was. A revealing example of an incorrect guess can be found in the story of the future Buddha Maitreya, as given in the \**Ārya-maitrī-sūtra*.<sup>34</sup> The Indian city in which Maitreya will appear is regularly referred to as Ketumatī in the Sanskrit literature, which in turn is translated into Tibetan as *Rgyal-mtshan blo-gros*, where *rgyal-mtshan* (lit. “royal ensign”) is a Tibetan translation of Skt. *ketu* “flag,” and *blo-gros* (“mind”) is an attempted rendition of the suffix *-matī*.<sup>35</sup> In their efforts to recover the original Indian spelling of *Rgyal-mtshan blo-gros*, however, the Mongolian translators reconstructed the first element in the name not as *ketu*, but as *dhvaja* – another Sanskrit word for “flag,” which is also regularly rendered into Tibetan as *rgyal-mtshan*. The Mongols, in other words, made an educated but erroneous guess, in all probability using a Tibetan-to-Sanskrit dictionary as their reference.<sup>36</sup>

An unmatched but synonymous equivalent of a Sanskrit term, then, is one of the leading indicators of back-translation. But there are other indicators as well. Incorrect word order, grammatical errors that can be traced to the structure of the intermediary language, and incorrect readings (due to visual confusion of certain letters or characters in the intermediary language) can all provide evidence that reconstruction, not preservation of an original text, has taken place. In sum, it is through the inadvertent errors of the back-translators that we can observe this process in operation.

In the case just described, of course, we are concerned with the

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reconstruction of individual Indian terms (in particular, proper names) within an overall Mongolian text. The same logic can be used, however, to evaluate the ancestry of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. If we can identify differences between the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* that can easily be explained by the presence of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* as an intermediary (and are difficult or impossible to explain otherwise), these will serve as evidence that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is indeed a back-translation from the Chinese.

We may begin with the first two examples cited above in our discussion of the divergences between the Sanskrit texts of the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra*, respectively. In the first of these the *Large Sūtra* reads *na anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā* (“form is not one thing and emptiness another”) or – to translate this expression more colloquially – “form is not different from emptiness.” In Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation of the *Large Sūtra* this is in turn rendered as *se pu i k’ung* (“form is not different from emptiness”), a perfectly good rendition of the Sanskrit. The Chinese version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang follows the wording of Kumārajīva’s *Large Sūtra* exactly, as it does almost without exception throughout the core passage of the text. The Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, however, does not conform to the wording of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*; instead it reads *rūpān na prthak śūnyatā* (“emptiness is not distinct from form”), a perfectly good (if somewhat unidiomatic) translation of Chinese *se pu i k’ung*. What we have here, in other words, is an exact counterpart of the sequence Skt. *ketu* → Tib. *rgyal-mtshan* → Skt. *dhvaja*, in which a Sanskrit term is transformed – via back-translation through a second-language intermediary – into a synonymous but quite different expression.

A similar transformation can be observed in our second example, in which the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* reads *na jarāmaraṇanirodhaḥ* “no extinction (*nirodha*) of old-age-and-death,” while the *Heart Sūtra* has *na jarāmaraṇakṣayo* “no destruction (*kṣaya*) of old-age-and-death.” Once again the effect of a Chinese intermediary provides an intelligible explanation, for the character *chirf* which appears in this expression in both the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* can serve as an equivalent of either *nirodha* or *kṣaya*

(though more commonly the latter). Kumārajīva apparently chose, in other words, to render the Sanskrit term *nirodha* into Chinese as *chin*, a reading maintained in the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and subsequently retranslated into Sanskrit as *kṣaya*.

Most striking of all, however, is the evidence contained in the third passage cited above. Here the sequence of negations is expressed in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* in singular verbal forms, while in the *Heart Sūtra* the entire list is given in the form of plural adjectives. But this is precisely the sort of information that is not generally marked in Chinese: though a plural can be specified if necessary, the usual practice is to let the number be implied by the context, while (as students of Chinese are all too well aware) a given word can easily serve such diverse functions as noun, adjective, or verb, depending once again on the context. Here the parallels are the following:

Sanskrit <i>Large Sūtra</i>	Chinese <i>Large Sūtra</i> (=Chinese <i>Heart Sūtra</i> )	Sanskrit <i>Heart Sūtra</i>
<i>na ... utpadyate</i>	<i>pu sheng<sup>d</sup></i>	<i>anutpannā</i>
<i>na nirudhyate</i>	<i>pu mieh<sup>e</sup></i>	<i>aniruddhā</i>
<i>na samkliśyate</i>	<i>pu kou<sup>f</sup></i>	<i>amalā</i>
<i>na vyavadāyate</i>	<i>pu ch'ing<sup>g</sup></i>	<i>avimalā</i>
<i>na hīyate</i>	<i>pu tseng<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>anūnā</i>
<i>na vardhate</i>	<i>pu chien<sup>i</sup></i>	<i>aparipūrṇā</i>

In each case the Chinese is a perfectly good rendition of the terminology contained in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, while the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* in turn represents a perfectly good rendition of the Chinese. Once again the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* offers us exactly the kind of synonym-shift that we would expect if it were a back-translation from the Chinese.

In sum, while the sequence of ideas found in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* matches that of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* exactly, *virtually every word* in these two texts (with the exception of certain fixed technical terminology such as the names of the *skandhas*, *āyatanas* and *dhātus*<sup>37</sup>) is different. Such a striking similarity in content,

combined with an equally striking difference in vocabulary, can only be explained as the result of a back-translation – that is, by the translation of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* from the Chinese.

#### *The Emergence of the Heart Sūtra: Indian and Chinese Evidence*

Though the philological data reviewed above can stand alone as convincing evidence for the back-translation of the *Heart Sūtra* from Chinese into Sanskrit, it is nonetheless of considerable interest to review the corroborating historical evidence as well. Such evidence can serve not only to support (or, if need be, to modify) our hypothesis concerning the general direction of transmission of the *sūtra* but also to provide concrete information as to the date, place, and general environment in which the *Heart Sūtra* was first created as an independent text.

One of the most reliable methods for documenting the emergence of the *Heart Sūtra* as an independent scripture is to identify the dates of the earliest commentaries on the text. On the Indian side, however, such works make a very late appearance; as we have already noted, the earliest extant Indian commentaries date only from the 8th century CE.<sup>38</sup> Nor has any other independent evidence for the existence of the text in India prior to this date (e.g., citations of the *sūtra* in other works or reports of its existence by Chinese travelers in India) yet come to light.<sup>39</sup> There is, in sum, no evidence for the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* in India before the 8th century CE.

When we turn to the Chinese records, by contrast, evidence for the avid use of the *sūtra* by Chinese Buddhists prior to this date is abundant. Extant commentaries include works by both of Hsüan-tsang's major disciples, K'uei-chi<sup>j</sup> and Wōnch'ük<sup>k</sup>, both dating from the latter half of the 7th century, as well as a group of three closely related works known only from manuscripts found at Tun-huang, of which at least one appears to have been composed prior to 645 CE.<sup>40</sup> We have solid evidence, then, for the existence of commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* in China no later than the second half of the 7th century CE, and quite possibly as much as several decades earlier.

As to evidence for the existence of Chinese versions of the *sūtra* itself, here matters become somewhat more complicated.

Modern catalogues list a total of eight Chinese versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, ranging in date from the early 5th through the beginning of the 11th century CE.<sup>41</sup> The attributions of the first two of these texts, however – those supposedly translated by Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang – are extremely problematic. The so-called “Kumārajīva version” is associated with his name for the first time only in an 8th-century catalogue, the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*; likewise there is no mention of a translation by Hsüan-tsang prior to the publication of the same catalogue.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it is noteworthy that Hsüan-tsang's biography speaks not of his translation of the text, but of his being given the text by a sick man he befriended.<sup>43</sup>

We will return to the question of the ancestry of these two versions of the text below. For the moment, however, the most important point to observe is this: that the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* is attested in China at least a century before its earliest known appearance in India.<sup>44</sup> Thus the dates of the first appearances of the *sūtra* in China and India, respectively, tell us nothing that would contradict the hypothesis that the Sanskrit text is a back-translation from the Chinese, and indeed offer much to support it.

### *The Frame Sections: Reconstructing the Context*

As we have seen, the core section of the *Heart Sūtra* has an exact parallel in the *Large Sūtra*, and East Asian commentators had realized as early as the latter half of the 7th century that the former was in fact an excerpt from the latter. What remains to be considered, however, are those passages we have described as the “frame sections” of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*: that is, the introductory and concluding sections of the text, which have no parallel in the larger *sūtra*. If the *Heart Sūtra* was indeed manufactured as an independent text in China, these sections should be purely apocryphal compositions – that is, they should have been created on Chinese soil, using only materials available there.

At this point we may return to consider some of the anomalies in the form and content of the *Heart Sūtra* noted above: first, that the text has no proper opening (that is, that it does not begin with the phrase “Thus have I heard at one time”); second, that

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Avalokiteśvara – who is almost unknown elsewhere in the Prajñāpāramitā literature – here plays a major role, while the Buddha is omitted altogether, and Subhūti (the main interlocutor in the mainstream Prajñāpāramitā texts) likewise does not appear at all; and third, that the text does not have a proper conclusion (in which some indication of the reaction of the Buddha's audience should be given), but concludes simply with a Sanskrit mantra, providing (for those accustomed to “proper” *sūtra* format) a sense of no real conclusion at all.<sup>45</sup> All of these anomalies occur exclusively in the frame sections of the text, though the context may lead us to read them into the core section as well. (Though Avalokiteśvara is never mentioned by name in the core section, for example, his presence in the introductory lines leads the reader to infer that he is the speaker in the core of the text as well.) Thus these divergences from the expected form and content of a Prajñāpāramitā *sūtra* may offer us certain clues as to the locus of the composition of the frame sections and, accordingly, to the time and place of the production of the *Heart Sūtra* itself as a free-standing scripture.

Is this, then, the sort of text we would expect to have been formulated in China? At first we might well be dubious of this assertion, for it is one of the hallmarks of Chinese apocryphal *sūtras* that their authors have exerted themselves at all costs to make them resemble their canonical Indian counterparts. That is, creators of Chinese apocryphal *sūtras* have generally been extremely careful to supply the proper Indian format (from the introductory “thus have I heard” to a proper conclusion), as well as peppering their newly-minted texts with authentic-sounding Indian names.<sup>46</sup> If this is indeed a Chinese apocryphal text, we must ask ourselves, why does its author seem to have made so little effort to make the text conform to Indian standards?

At this point the writings of FUKUI Fumimasa provide an important clue, for Fukui's research has led him to conclude that the *Heart Sūtra* is not really a *sūtra* at all; rather, the Chinese expression *hsin ching*, which is generally translated into English as “Heart Sūtra,” should be understood instead as meaning “*dhāraṇī* scripture” – that is, a text intended for recitation, not (as has previously been



supposed) a text intended to represent the “heart,” or essence, of the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy.<sup>47</sup> If this is indeed the case (and Fukui’s arguments in this regard are quite convincing), we need not wonder at the absence of the standard *sūtra* format in the earliest Chinese version of this text. Since the text was intended for ritual use (that is, as a *dhāraṇī* to be chanted) rather than to impersonate a genuine Indian *sūtra*, it is no surprise that the author(s) of the text have not tried to cloak their product in foreign garb; nor, we might add, that the text does not contain that other hallmark of most Chinese apocryphal texts: the intrusion of indigenous Chinese (i.e., non-Indian and non-Buddhist) ideas.<sup>48</sup>

But we must still consider whether it is plausible to contend that the introductory and concluding portions of the text could have been manufactured in China. Foremost among the items to be considered in this regard are two elements in the text: first, the substitution of Avalokiteśvara for the expected Prajñāpāramitā spokespersons, Subhūti and the Buddha himself; and second, the presence in the concluding section of a perfectly good Sanskrit mantra.<sup>49</sup> Both are features that have no parallel in the *Large Sūtra* from which the core passage was clearly derived, and indeed are extremely unusual in the Prajñāpāramitā literature in general. Thus both Avalokiteśvara and the concluding mantra appear to have been introduced into the frame sections gratuitously, as it were, based on considerations extraneous to the *Large Sūtra*.

Would such considerations have been found in the time and place where the *Heart Sūtra* first makes its appearance (that is, in southwest China in the 7th century)? The answer, emphatically, is yes. The presence of Avalokiteśvara is not at all unexpected, for this figure was by far the most popular *bodhisattva* in China at this time, as attested by both textual and artistic evidence.<sup>50</sup> Indeed it is probably fair to say that his following among Chinese Buddhists over the centuries has far exceeded his popularity in India.<sup>51</sup> Thus the choice of Avalokiteśvara as the central figure in a newly created Buddhist recitation text would be perfectly plausible in a Chinese milieu.

But what of the mantra itself – the well-known expression

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*gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā* – with which the text (in its shorter recension) comes to an end? If the mantra were found in the core of the text (that is, the portion which duplicates material contained in the *Large Sūtra*) we would have no difficulty, for this section was clearly composed in India. Yet the mantra does not occur here but in the frame section, which (if the reasoning outlined above is correct) should be viewed as a purely Chinese creation. How, then, are we to explain the presence of a perfectly good Sanskrit mantra in a text that was tailored in China?

Here a point recently made by both McRae and Fukui is of considerable importance, for some or all of the mantra found in the *Heart Sūtra* also occurs in at least three other texts contained in the Chinese Buddhist canon. Of these one is a catalogue of mantras, said to have been translated into Chinese in 653 CE,<sup>52</sup> while two others are *Mahāyāna sūtras*.<sup>53</sup> It would thus have been perfectly plausible that the composer of the original Chinese *Heart Sūtra* adopted the mantra in question from an existing work and inserted it directly into his text.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, not only the mantra itself, but also the string of epithets that precede it (“the supreme mantra, the mantra which is equal to the unequalled,” etc.) have now been shown to occur independently in other Chinese texts.<sup>54a</sup> The presence of a genuine Sanskrit mantra, then, offers no obstacle to the hypothesis that the *Heart Sūtra* as an independent text was an indigenous Chinese production.

When we consider the likelihood that the frame elements are entirely Chinese in origin, this casts certain textual problems in the Sanskrit version of the *sūtra* in a wholly new light. For most of the problematic elements in the Sanskrit text are found precisely in these frame sections and not in the core of the text. If we treat the Chinese – rather than the Sanskrit – as the original, much can be clarified, for the language used here (particularly in the list of epithets of the mantra) includes Chinese terms for which no Sanskrit equivalent is readily apparent. When the text tells us, for example, that the mantra is “genuine, not vain” (*chen shih pu hsü* 眞不誑), the wording is entirely natural in Chinese, while its Sanskrit counterpart *satyam amithyatvāt* [sic] (translated rather idiosyncratically by Conze as “[it is] true. For

what could go wrong?") has perplexed a number of modern readers. Likewise it is intriguing to note that the typically Chinese term *shen* "spirit" in the expression *ta shen chou* (lit. "great spirit incantation") has no equivalent in the Sanskrit version, which reads simply *mahā-mantra* ("great mantra") in Conze's edition, while the Sanskrit word *mantra* elsewhere in this section corresponds to the character *chou* alone. It seems quite likely that a Sanskrit translator would have had great difficulty in finding an appropriate Buddhist technical term to represent the not-particularly-Buddhist term *shen* in this context.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the Chinese expression *chiu-ching nieh-p'an* (lit. "ultimate[ly] *nirvāna*") is attested in a number of other Buddhist texts, and might well be described as standard (even idiomatic) Buddhist Chinese, while the corresponding Sanskrit phrase *niṣṭhā-nirvāna* (in which the first term can carry such meanings as "state," "perfection," or "termination") strikes the reader as overly abbreviated at best, and has required a certain amount of textual supplementation not only in the English translation of Edward Conze, but even in some of the Sanskrit manuscript copies themselves.<sup>56</sup> Both in terms of vocabulary and of grammatical structure, then, it is easier to understand the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* as a translation from the Chinese than the reverse.

We have seen that it is fairly easy to identify elements in the frame sections of the *Heart Sūtra* that make better sense in the Chinese than in the Sanskrit. But even in the core passage of the Sanskrit version of the text we can identify, in retrospect, elements that are less idiomatic than we would expect from an Indian composition. The format of the list of negations of the six sense organs, for example – which in the *Heart Sūtra* reads *na cakṣuḥ-śrotra-ghrāṇa-jihvā-kāya-manāṃsi* – simply does not "ring" properly (that is, does not sound idiomatic) to the well-trained Sanskrit ear.<sup>57</sup> Rather, the construction one would expect to find is precisely what we have in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, where the negative *na* is repeated before each of the sense-organs in turn (in the Gilgit manuscript, *na cakṣur na śrotraṃ na ghrāṇam na jihvā na kāye na manāḥ*). The *Heart Sūtra* thus diverges from the anticipated Sanskrit usage, offering instead a precise replication of the word order of the Chinese.

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If the evidence reviewed above seems unanimous in supporting the hypothesis that the Chinese text is indeed the antecedent of the Sanskrit, we are still faced with an important historical question: when, and by whom, could the text have been transported to India and rendered into Sanskrit? Here our discussion will necessarily become more speculative, for we have neither a Sanskrit colophon relating the origins of the text nor an external historical source describing its transmission. Nonetheless there is strong circumstantial evidence pointing to the role of a specific figure: the well-known Chinese Buddhist scholar, translator, and pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang.

#### *Historical Evidence: In the Footsteps of Hsüan-tsang*

In the discussion above we have noted that Chinese commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* begin to appear considerably before their Indian counterparts. What we have not mentioned so far, however, is a noteworthy difference between the Chinese commentaries, on the one hand, and their Indian and Tibetan counterparts on the other: all extant Chinese commentaries are based on a single version of the *Heart Sūtra*, namely, the version associated with Hsüan-tsang (T. No. 251), and thus with a version of the shorter recension of the text (Conze's ST); all Indo-Tibetan commentaries, by contrast, are based on the longer version (LT), which is clearly a later recension.<sup>58</sup> The earliest commentaries, then, are not only in Chinese, but are all based on the version generally described as a "translation" by Hsüan-tsang.

The spotlight that this places on Hsüan-tsang's version of the text raises two further questions: where did Hsüan-tsang get his copy of the text, and what role did he play in its subsequent diffusion? That Hsüan-tsang was already familiar with the *Heart Sūtra* prior to his departure for the Western Regions is made quite clear in his biography, where his initial encounter with the text is described as follows:

Formerly when the Master was in Szechuan, he once saw a sick man suffering from foul boils and dressed in rags. With pity he took him to his monastery and supplied him with food and clothes. Out of gratitude the sick man taught the Master this *sūtra*, which he often recited.<sup>59</sup>

Subsequently in the course of his journey Hsüan-tsang is said to have recited the text at various points along the way when he was in danger, finding it even more powerful than appealing to the *bodhisattva* Kuan-yin.<sup>60</sup> We are given to understand, in other words, that this text immediately became a favorite of Hsüan-tsang's, so much so that he entrusted himself to it in a number of life-threatening situations. This account provides concrete evidence, then, both of Hsüan-tsang's love for the text and his transport of its content (at least in oral form) to India.

What, then, would he have done if, upon arriving in India, he discovered that the Indian Buddhists were unfamiliar with this text? According to his biography, this was exactly what took place in the case of another text, *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, widely believed to be a Chinese apocryphon. As Hui-li<sup>61</sup> tells the story, during his stay at Nālandā University Hsüan-tsang discovered that this important text was unknown to his Indian correligionists. And his response, we are told, was to translate the text into Sanskrit.<sup>61</sup> Thus there is a clear precedent for viewing Hsüan-tsang not merely as the passive recipient of Indian Buddhist learning, but also as an active transmitter of Chinese Buddhist culture in foreign lands.

We are not told, of course, that Hsüan-tsang translated the *Heart Sūtra* into Sanskrit, and indeed we should not expect this fact to be recorded even if Hsüan-tsang and his biographers knew it to be the case. For in China the fundamental criterion for the authenticity of a Buddhist *sūtra* is its Indian pedigree, and to state outright that Hsüan-tsang had translated the *Heart Sūtra* from Chinese into Sanskrit would cast doubt upon its legitimacy, arousing suspicions that it might be a non-Indian text and hence (by Chinese Buddhist standards) apocryphal. One can well imagine that Hsüan-tsang, convinced of the authenticity of the *Heart Sūtra* as a religious text and with first-hand experience of its supernatural protective power, would simply have concluded that the Indian original had been lost. Under the circumstances he may have done just what we would expect him to do: quietly re-translate the text back into Sanskrit.

If the image of Hsüan-tsang as a forger of an Indian Buddhist text seems amusing (or perhaps, to other readers, alarming), it is

because it is so contrary to what the standard histories of Buddhism would lead us to expect. The Chinese people, we are told, were the recipients – not the creators – of Buddhist *sūtras*, and the “*sūtra* trade” flowed exclusively from West to East. Yet it is now becoming clear that the Chinese were avid producers as well as consumers of Buddhist *sūtras*, and that some of the most popular scriptures in East Asia – e.g., the *Humane King's Sūtra* (*Jen-wang ching*) and the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Ta-sheng ch'i-shin lun*) were the product of Chinese hands.<sup>62</sup> Even more striking is the convincing evidence recently set forth by Robert Buswell for the Korean origin of the *Vajrasamādhi Sūtra* (*Chin-kang san-mei ching*), a text subsequently exported westward to both China and Tibet.<sup>63</sup>

It is not unheard of, then, for Buddhist *sūtras* to flow from East to West, and indeed evidence is accumulating of an important backwash of Chinese Buddhist influence into eastern Central Asia (the Tarim Basin region) during and after the late T'ang period.<sup>64</sup> That the *Heart Sūtra* should have been a part of this East-to-West trade is thus not at all impossible.

The role of Hsüan-tsang himself in the back-translation of the *Heart Sūtra* into Sanskrit cannot, of course, be definitively proven. We have at our disposal only circumstantial evidence, which is insufficient to decide the case with certainty. It is possible that Hsüan-tsang simply left the text with his correligionists in India, where it awaited the efforts of some other Chinese pilgrim before it was finally translated into Sanskrit. Nonetheless, whatever the specific circumstances surrounding the Sanskrit translation of the text may have been, we should note that the first Indian commentaries on the text appear roughly a century and a half after Hsüan-tsang's visit. Thus if it was not Hsüan-tsang himself who translated the text into Sanskrit, we must credit this work to some other Chinese visitor who would have arrived in India at approximately the same time, someone fond enough of the *sūtra* to have transported it westward over this great distance and skilled enough in Sanskrit to have translated (or overseen the translation of) the text back into an Indian “original.” Until further evidence of other possibilities should surface, Hsüan-tsang must remain the most likely candidate for the

transmission of this Chinese creation to India.

*The Heart Sūtra in China: The Role of Hsüan-tsang*

We may now pause to consider briefly an issue whose thorough explication is properly the preserve of the Sinologist: that of Hsüan-tsang's role in the diffusion of the *Heart Sūtra* in China. A thorough study of this topic would be highly desirable, and it is hoped that a specialist in Chinese Buddhism will take up this challenge in the future. In the meantime, however, a few preliminary comments may be offered on this topic.

Up to this point we have focused on only one version of the *Heart Sūtra*: the Chinese "translation" (a term we can now use only in quotation marks) of the shorter recension of the text popularly attributed to Hsüan-tsang, together with its Sanskrit counterpart. But there are other versions of the *Heart Sūtra* found in the Chinese canon as well. Of the eight versions contained in the Taishō canon three represent the shorter recension of the text (ST), while the other five are variant editions of the longer recension (LT).<sup>65</sup> In addition to these eight extant versions of the text we should also take note of two titles found in ancient catalogues which have been considered by some scholars to represent early translations of the text into Chinese, though the texts themselves are no longer extant.<sup>66</sup>

All five of the Chinese versions of the longer recension of the text postdate Hsüan-tsang's edition by periods ranging from several decades to several centuries. It is the earlier versions of the *sūtra*, however, that are of the greatest interest to us here, since we are interested in determining what versions of the text, if any, were circulating in China prior to Hsüan-tsang's involvement with the text. More specifically, the questions we must confront are these: first, when did any version of the *Heart Sūtra* first surface in China; second, what version of the text did Hsüan-tsang obtain during his sojourn in Szechwan; and third, what changes (if any) did he subsequently make in the content of the text?

"Lost translations" of the *Heart Sūtra*. Two titles that have been considered by some scholars to represent lost Chinese transla-

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tions of the *Heart Sūtra* are known to us only through their inclusion in Tao-an's\* catalogue, the *Tsung-li chung-ching mu-lu*<sup>†</sup> (itself non-extant, but largely reproduced in Seng-yu's<sup>‡</sup> *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi*,<sup>‡</sup> completed c. 515 CE).<sup>67</sup> Both are listed here as the work of anonymous (that is, unknown) translators. The attributions of these translations to Chih Ch'ien<sup>§</sup> and Kumārajīva, respectively, given in later scripture catalogues are clearly after the fact and can easily be discounted.<sup>68</sup> Their titles, however, are intriguingly similar to those of subsequent versions of the *Heart Sūtra*. Titled *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i chüan*<sup>¶</sup> and *Po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i chüan*,<sup>¶¶</sup> respectively, both are clearly intended to be construed as mantras (*shen-chou*<sup>¶¶</sup>) based upon – or at least associated with – the Prajñāpāramitā corpus. In the case of the first of these titles the reference seems at first glance to refer specifically to the *Large Sūtra*, whose title (in Kumārajīva's translation) is *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching*.<sup>¶¶</sup> Yet upon further reflection this association is unfounded, for if a work by this title really was included in Tao-an's original catalogue, it would predate the appearance of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Large Sūtra* by several decades.<sup>69</sup> Earlier Chinese translations of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines* (to use the Sanskrit form of the title) do not use the terms *mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi*;<sup>¶¶¶</sup> rather, Mokṣala's version is titled *Fang kuang po-jo ching*<sup>¶¶¶</sup> (T No. 221), while Dharmarakṣa's text is labeled *Kuang tsang ching*<sup>¶¶¶</sup> (T No. 222). Thus the very use of the term *po-jo po-lo-mi*<sup>¶¶</sup> (let alone *mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi*<sup>¶¶</sup>) in reference to the *Large Sūtra* in a Chinese text prior to the time of Kumārajīva is anachronistic, and casts doubt on the likelihood that these titles are genuine references to early versions of the *Heart Sūtra*. In the absence of an extant copy of either text, then, we are not in a position to say anything about their content. Until and unless new data should appear we must leave open the question of whether either of the texts represented by these titles had any association with what eventually came to be known as the *Heart Sūtra*.

The three extant versions of the shorter (ST) recension, however, clearly demand our attention. These are the Chinese version attributed to Kumārajīva (T No. 250) which, if the attribution

were correct, would date to some two and a half centuries before Hsüan-tsang's time; the transliterated Sanskrit version in Chinese characters (T No. 255), attributed by at least one modern scholar to Hsüan-tsang himself; and the Chinese version discussed above (T No. 251), which has traditionally been considered a translation by Hsüan-tsang from the Sanskrit.

*The "Kumārajīva translation" (T No. 250).* A thorough evaluation of the origins of the so-called "Kumārajīva version" of the *Heart Sūtra* has long been needed, and significant progress in this enterprise has recently been made by Japanese and Western scholars. To summarize their findings briefly, it seems clear that students of Kumārajīva (in particular, Seng-chao) read and commented on the core passage of the *Heart Sūtra* found in Kumārajīva's version of the *Large Sūtra*.<sup>70</sup> There is no evidence, however, that they were aware of the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* as a separate text, nor is there any evidence that Kumārajīva himself had any role in the production of the "translation" associated with his name. In the earliest catalogues of his works no such translation is listed, and for this reason alone the attribution of this text to Kumārajīva in later works is highly suspect.<sup>71</sup>

The actual content of this translation raises some intriguing questions concerning the process of its composition. The bulk of the text agrees word for word with Hsüan-tsang's edition of the *sūtra* (T No. 251); yet in certain crucial respects the two versions diverge. These divergences may be summarized as follows:

(1) at the beginning of the text (T 8.847c, lines 5-7) Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* contains a series of 37 characters which have no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version of the text;

(2) in the midst of the core passage of the text (T 8.847c, line 10) Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* contains a line stating that "these empty *dharma*s are not past, not future, not present" (*shih k'ung fa fei kuoch'ü fei wei-lai fei hsien-tsa<sup>72</sup>*) which has no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version; and

(3) at another key point in the core passage – that is, in the first statement of the non-difference between form and emptiness –

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Kumārajīva's text phrases this statement differently than does Hsüan-tsang; and

(4) at various points throughout both the core and the frame sections the two versions differ in their rendering of certain Buddhist technical terms (e.g., the terms *prajñāpāramitā*, *skandha*, *bodhisattva*, and the names of Avalokiteśvara and Śāriputra).

These divergences, I believe, provide us with our best clues to the ancestry of the two texts as well as to the relationship between them.

Beginning with the first, as Fukui has recently pointed out there are near the beginning of the so-called Kumārajīva translation (T No. 250) a series of 37 characters which have no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version of the text (or, for that matter, in any other Chinese or Sanskrit recension of the *sūtra*).<sup>72</sup> These characters – reading in English translation "Śāriputra, because form is empty, it is without the mark of disfiguring (*nao-hua<sup>73</sup>*); because perception (*vedanā*) is empty, it is without the mark of perception; because concept (*saṃjñā*) is empty, it is without the mark of knowing; because conditioning force (*saṃskāra*) is empty, it is without the mark of production; because consciousness (*vijñāna*) is empty, it is without the mark of awakening (*chüeh<sup>74</sup>*). And why?" (T 8.847c5-7) – correspond exactly, however, with a line in Kumārajīva's version of the *Large Sūtra*.<sup>73</sup>

Fukui also draws attention to the second of the divergences listed above, namely the statement in Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* – and in this version alone – that "empty *dharma*s are not past, not future, [and] not present." Once again, however (as Fukui rightly points out), this line corresponds character for character with a line in the *Large Sūtra* translation of Kumārajīva,<sup>74</sup> but is found in no other version (in any language, we might add) of the *Heart Sūtra*.

Basing his discussion only on the features listed in (1) and (2) above, Fukui concludes that the word-for-word identity between these elements unique to the so-called Kumārajīva translation of the *Heart Sūtra* (among *Heart Sūtra* recensions) but found also in Kumārajīva's own version of the *Large Sūtra* serves as proof that this recension of the *Heart Sūtra* is a genuine translation by Kumārajīva

himself. This contention is problematic, however, for it rests on a questionable assumption: namely, that if a single individual (e.g., Kumārajīva) were to translate both the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* into Chinese from Sanskrit originals, the two Chinese translations should agree word for word *even though the Sanskrit texts do not*. For, as we have already seen, the Sanskrit texts of the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* diverge in a number of respects. Thus the nearly verbatim agreement between the two Chinese texts should instead arouse our suspicions. Moreover, even if a given translator were to render two perfectly identical texts on two separate occasions into a second language, the odds against his or her choosing exactly the same word in each instance are enormous. And this is especially true of a translator like Kumārajīva, who is renowned not for a wooden faithfulness to the Sanskrit original but for his fluid and context-sensitive renditions. Thus the character-for-character correspondences between the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva and the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to the same person can be used to argue against – rather than for – this attribution. Instead, such a close correspondence serves as evidence of what we in the 20th century would describe as plagiarism: the adoption of one individual's wording by another.

It is the third divergence listed above – the fact that the so-called Kumārajīva translation of the *Heart Sūtra* phrases the initial statement of the non-difference between form and emptiness in wording distinct from the version of Hsüan-tsang – that may offer us the most valuable clue to the ancestry of “Kumārajīva's” version of the text. For in this line the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva does not agree with his own translation of the *Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom*; rather, it corresponds to his version of the *Ta chih-tu lun*<sup>am</sup> (Skt. \**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*).<sup>75</sup> Where the *Heart Sūtra* of Hsüan-tsang and the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva both read *se pu i k'ung*<sup>b</sup> (“form is not different from emptiness”),<sup>76</sup> the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva and the *Ta chih-tu lun* both read *fei se i k'ung*<sup>am</sup> (“it is not that form is different from emptiness”).<sup>77</sup> How, then, are we to explain this divergence?

The answer, I believe, is a simple one. If we combine this piece of evidence with the fact just set forth – that the near-identity

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in wording between the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* should be attributed to borrowing by a third party and not to sequential translations by a single individual – we can then draw a further conclusion: that the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva was based not directly on his version of the *Large Sūtra*, but on the citations from that *sūtra* contained in the *Ta chih-tu lun*. In other words, the *Heart Sūtra* may be viewed as the creation of a Chinese author who was more familiar with the *Large Sūtra* as presented in this widely popular commentary than with the text of the *sūtra* itself.

The hypothesis that the so-called Kumārajīva version (T No. 250) of the *Heart Sūtra* was created on the basis of the *Ta chih-tu lun* also accords well with the fourth and final divergence listed above: the fact that in numerous respects this recension uses vocabulary that is quite at home in the translations of Kumārajīva, but for which Hsüan-tsang (and the recension of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to him) used later, more scholastic terms. If T No. 250 was the creation of writer(s) familiar with Kumārajīva's work, in other words, we should not be at all surprised to find that it renders the Sanskrit word *skandha* into Chinese as *yin*,<sup>80</sup> not *yün*<sup>81</sup> (the reading found in Hsüan-tsang's works, and in the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to him). Nor should we be surprised to find Avalokiteśvara given in Kumārajīva's standard rendering as *Kuan-shih-yin*<sup>82</sup> (in contrast to Hsüan-tsang's *Kuan-tzu-tsa*<sup>83</sup>), Śāriputra as *Shê-li-fu*<sup>84</sup> (vs. Hsüan-tsang's *Shê-li-tzu*<sup>85</sup>), *prajñāpāramitā* as *po-jo po-lo-mi*<sup>86</sup> (vs. Hsüan-tsang's *po-jo po-lo-mi-to*<sup>87</sup>), and the word *bodhisattva* in its standard Chinese rendering of *p'u-sa*<sup>88</sup> (while in one instance Hsüan-tsang's *Heart Sūtra* offers the rather pedantic reading *p'u-ti-sa-to*<sup>89</sup>). T No. 250 need not be, in other words, the work of Kumārajīva himself in order to exhibit Kumārajīva's standard vocabulary; the core passage has simply been extracted from his *Ta chih-tu lun*, while the frame sections need only be the product of a community or an individual at home with his renderings of Buddhist technical terms.

If this text is not the work of Kumārajīva himself, then, when (and under what circumstances) was it produced? This question cannot be answered easily, though the evident patterning of T No. 250 on Kumārajīva's *Ta chih-tu lun* provides us at least with a

*terminus post quem* for its composition; that is, it cannot have been produced prior to the completion of the *Ta chih-tu lun* itself, which according to the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao li* took place in 406 CE.<sup>78</sup> No comparable *terminus ante quem*, however, is available to us, and indeed at least one scholar has suggested that this version of the text may postdate that of Hsüan-tsang himself.<sup>79</sup> In the absence of firm evidence, therefore, we must restrict our inquiry to the most obvious question: that is, when the so-called "Kumārajīva translation" of the *Heart Sūtra* first gained currency in China. Yet the answer to this question is startling, for this version of the *sūtra* (unlike the one attributed to Hsüan-tsang) never became popular in China. Not a single Chinese commentary is based on this version (nor, for that matter, on any version of the *sūtra* other than that of Hsüan-tsang),<sup>80</sup> and the version of the text recited throughout China, Korea, and Japan is the recension attributed to Hsüan-tsang. In retrospect this may indeed be the most telling indication that Kumārajīva played no role in the creation of this version of the *Heart Sūtra*, for it is otherwise quite unheard of in Chinese Buddhist history for a work of Hsüan-tsang's to eclipse one of Kumārajīva's. Hsüan-tsang's cumbersome and (by Chinese standards) overly literal style, together with his scholarly innovations in Buddhist technical terminology (most of which were never accepted outside limited scholarly circles), seem to have put off most of his Chinese audience. Kumārajīva's translations of a number of works have thus remained the most popular until today, despite the existence of later (and technically more accurate) renditions by Hsüan-tsang. If a version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva had indeed been in circulation in China prior to the appearance of the version attributed to Hsüan-tsang, it seems highly unlikely that Hsüan-tsang's edition would have succeeded in supplanting it.

Based on the evidence presently available, then, we cannot determine with certainty just when the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva was produced. We are quite safe in concluding, however, that this *Heart Sūtra* is not the work of Kumārajīva himself, but is an adaptation of his version of the *Large Sūtra* (or rather, an adaptation of the version of his *Large Sūtra* contained in the *Ta chih-*

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*tu lun*) by a third party. We will return to a consideration of the relationship between this version of the *sūtra* and the version attributed to Hsüan-tsang below, at which point we will again take up the fourth feature noted above, namely the divergences in technical vocabulary between the versions of the *Heart Sūtra* associated with Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang. What we can state with certainty at this point is that this version of the *Heart Sūtra* is neither Kumārajīva's nor an independent translation from the Sanskrit.

*The Hsüan-tsang "translation."* But should we raise the same question concerning the Chinese version of the text attributed to Hsüan-tsang? As we have seen, we can no longer use the term "translation" to apply to this text, for there is every indication that it was fabricated in China. Moreover, Hsüan-tsang's biography speaks not of his translation of the text, but of his initial encounter with the *sūtra* in Szechwan. But the possibility of some editorial input by Hsüan-tsang into the text as it has come down to us must still be examined. What, then, was the role of Hsüan-tsang in composing, editing, or popularizing the text in the form in which it has come down to us?

In retrospect, we should perhaps have been alerted to the fact that this text is not what later generations have taken it to be – that is, a translation from the Sanskrit by Hsüan-tsang – by the fact that the *sūtra* does not appear where we would expect it to: as part of Hsüan-tsang's *magnum opus*, the translation of a compendium of Prajñāpāramitā texts ranging from the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Lines* (Skt. *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) to the *Questions of Suvikrāntavikrāmi* (Skt. *Suvikrāntavikrāmi-paripṛcchā-sūtra*).<sup>81</sup> Here the various *sūtras* are not treated as separate texts, but as chapters in a single work, a rather unusual arrangement that may well go back to Hsüan-tsang himself. No Prajñāpāramitā text translated by Hsüan-tsang appears anywhere else in the canon but in this collection – none, that is, but the popular *Heart Sūtra* edition associated with his name, which appears in the general Prajñāpāramitā section. This in itself may tell us something of the history of the text:

that it was first classified simply as a Prajñāpāramitā text, in all probability listed as “translator unknown,” and that only later – through its close association with Hsüan-tsang and his activities in popularizing it – it came to be attributed to him.

But did Hsüan-tsang simply pass on the *sūtra* as he received it, or did he himself leave a certain editorial imprint on the text? In a number of respects we find evidence that Hsüan-tsang may have “corrected” the text, in all probability after his travels in India.

In most respects Hsüan-tsang’s *Heart Sūtra* contains readings identical to those found in Kumārajīva’s *Large Sūtra*. It does differ, however, in the translation (or transliteration) of certain terms, most notably the spellings of the name of Śāriputra as *Shê-li-tzu*<sup>81</sup> (vs. *Shê-li-fu*<sup>82</sup> in Kumārajīva’s translations and in the *Heart Sūtra* erroneously attributed to him), Avalokiteśvara as *Kuan-tzu-tsai*<sup>83</sup> (vs. *Kuan-shih-yin*<sup>84</sup>), and the Sanskrit word *skandha* as *yün*<sup>85</sup> (vs. *yin*<sup>86</sup>). Other minor divergences between the versions of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and Kumārajīva, respectively, can be identified as well; since the above three examples are the most regular and the most easily traceable, we will restrict our inquiry to them.<sup>82</sup>

A survey of the uses of the terms *Shê-li-tzu*, *Kuan-tzu-tsai* and *yün* (in the sense of Skt. *skandha*) in the Taishō canon reveals a striking and consistent pattern, for all three of these terms appear to have been introduced into the Chinese Buddhist literature by Hsüan-tsang himself. Not a single one of them is certain to have appeared in the work of any translator active prior to Hsüan-tsang’s time, and indeed the pool of Chinese translators and commentators who later adopt these spellings is conspicuously small.<sup>83</sup> The appearance of all three of these terms in a work that is certain to have been in circulation by the middle of the 7th century is thus a virtual fingerprint of Hsüan-tsang’s editorial activity.<sup>84</sup>

Should we assume, then, that Hsüan-tsang was responsible not only for the editing of the text, but for the composition of the frame section itself? This would, I believe, be going too far. His biography is eloquent on the extent of his devotion to the text and its recitation, a devotion that seems unlikely to have been so strong if Hsüan-tsang himself were the author (or the partial author) of the text.

The most likely possibility, it would seem, is that Hsüan-tsang encountered the text in its full form and made only minor editorial changes, in all likelihood after his extended study of Sanskrit terms in India.

We cannot determine, on the basis of the evidence presently available, the extent of the resemblance between the text given to Hsüan-tsang in Szechwan and the version traditionally attributed to Kumārajīva. In addition to the changes in technical vocabulary introduced by Hsüan-tsang himself, if a text resembling T No. 250 was indeed the prototype (and not a later creation) we must also account for the absence of the 37 characters at the beginning of the longer version from Hsüan-tsang’s copy of the text, and for the absence of the line “empty *dharma*s are not past, not future, [and] not present.” Hsüan-tsang’s version of the *sūtra*, in other words, is somewhat abbreviated when compared with the so-called Kumārajīva version, or indeed with the core of the *sūtra* found in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* itself. If these lines were not removed by Hsüan-tsang himself, then, they must have been extracted at some time prior to his encounter with the text.

At least three scenarios can be envisioned to explain the divergences between Hsüan-tsang’s version of the *sūtra* and the only other version (T No. 250) which can lay any claim to priority: (1) T No. 250 was fabricated after Hsüan-tsang’s version of the *sūtra* was already in circulation, perhaps by a traditionalist party unhappy with Hsüan-tsang’s innovations in Buddhist technical terms; (2) the version of the *sūtra* obtained by Hsüan-tsang in Szechwan was essentially identical with the text now classified as T No. 250, and Hsüan-tsang himself not only “corrected” its technical terminology, but excised certain portions of the text; and (3) the version of the text given to Hsüan-tsang had already been abbreviated before he obtained it, and the innovations introduced by Hsüan-tsang were limited to certain changes in technical terminology. At the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to determine with certainty which of these scenarios is correct. As a working hypothesis, however, the third possibility seems the most likely.



The "Hsüan-tsang" transliteration (T No. 256). We now come to the most peculiar version of the *Heart Sūtra* found in the Chinese canon: a Sanskrit version in which the Indian sounds are recorded in Chinese characters.<sup>85</sup> In contrast to the Chinese version attributed to Hsüan-tsang, this transliterated version seems not to have been widely circulated in China, for it was not included in the Buddhist canons produced at least from the Liao through the Ch'ing dynasties (10th-19th centuries), and was recovered only in the 20th century by Western archaeologists at Tun-huang.<sup>86</sup>

The text is not assigned a translator in the Taishō edition of the canon (nor indeed in the body of the text itself), for it is not, of course, a translation. Nonetheless, it would be of considerable interest to know both the date of this transliterated edition and the identity of the person or persons responsible for its recording. In a recent article Leon Hurvitz has suggested that this transliteration, or "Brahmanical text" (as he calls it), was set down in writing by Hsüan-tsang himself.<sup>87</sup> A quite different thesis, however, has recently been put forth by Fukui, who argues that the text is not the work of Hsüan-tsang at all, but is to be attributed to the 8th century tantric master, Amoghavajra.<sup>88</sup>

Fukui's arguments in this regard are quite convincing, and the reader is referred to his monumental study for further details. One piece of supporting evidence not discussed by Fukui, however, may be mentioned here: that is, that the transliterated version diverges in several respects from the Chinese text attributed to Hsüan-tsang. Where Hsüan-tsang's Chinese text reads "[he] passed beyond all suffering" (8.848c4), for example, the transliterated text – like all the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra* discovered to date – has no equivalent of this line.<sup>89</sup> Again, where the transliterated text reads *rūpam śūnyam śūnyataiva rūpam* ("form is empty, emptiness itself is form," 8.851b29-c1) the Chinese text associated with Hsüan-tsang lacks any equivalent of these lines. Likewise the expression *na vidyā na vidyākṣayo nāvidyā nāvidyākṣayo* ("no knowledge, no destruction of knowledge; no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance" in the transliterated text (8.851c17-19) does not match Hsüan-tsang's Chinese version, which reads simply "no ignorance, no destruction

of ignorance" (8.848c9). Finally, while Hsüan-tsang's Chinese version reads "no knowledge and no attainment" (8.848c10), the transliterated text contains an expansion of this expression found in some (but not all) copies of the Sanskrit text, namely *na jñāna na prāpti(r) nābhisama(yaḥ)* ("no knowledge, no attainment, [and] no realization," 8.852a2-3). The two texts, in other words, diverge in content (not just in wording) in a number of respects, and thus are extremely unlikely to have been the work of the same person. In particular, they are unlikely to have been the work of a person like Hsüan-tsang, whose philological and textual precision were legendary, and who certainly would not have let such discrepancies go unnoticed.<sup>90</sup>

But if the two texts were not produced by the same person, then which – if either – should we attribute to Hsüan-tsang? The answer hinges in part, of course, on the degree of probability with which we can establish some connection between Hsüan-tsang and the text regularly associated with his name. As we have already seen, however, T No. 251 (ordinarily described as a "translation" by Hsüan-tsang) does indeed contain the distinctive technical vocabulary that appears in other translations and original compositions by Hsüan-tsang. Moreover, it is this version of the *sūtra* that served as the basis for commentaries by both of Hsüan-tsang's main students, K'uei-chi and Wōnch'ük. The combined weight of this evidence seems sufficient, in the view of this writer, to point to this version of the *sūtra* as the one used by Hsüan-tsang.

#### *Hsüan-tsang and the Reception of the Heart Sūtra in China.*

Whatever the extent of Hsüan-tsang's role in the editing of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* associated with his name, we can be certain of one thing: that it was this version, and not any other, that first gained wide popularity in China, and that it has remained down to the present day the sole version of the *sūtra* that is actually read, chanted, and commented upon in East Asia. And this situation was clearly already in effect during the T'ang dynasty. As Fukui has pointed out, most T'ang-period references to the *Heart Sūtra* refer to the text as the *To hsin ching*,<sup>91</sup> where the first character (pronounced *to* in the modern

Beijing dialect, but *ta* in T'ang-period Chinese) represents the final character of the transliteration of the Sanskrit word *prajñāpāramitā*.<sup>91</sup> These three characters are, however, the last three elements in *Hsüan-tsang's* title of the text; the character *to* does not appear in the title of the version attributed to Kumārajīva (nor, for that matter, in the titles of the two non-extant texts popularly supposed to have been early versions of the *Heart Sūtra*<sup>92</sup>). That some of the later Chinese renditions of the *sūtra* (none of which ever gained significant popularity) also end in these three characters – quite likely in imitation of *Hsüan-tsang's* text – need not dissuade us from drawing the obvious conclusion: that these T'ang-period mentions of the *To hsin ching* refer specifically to *Hsüan-tsang's* edition.

It was certainly *Hsüan-tsang*, then, who was responsible for the widespread popularity of the *sūtra* in China, and in all probability for its initial circulation (and perhaps its translation into Sanskrit) in India as well. It now remains only for us to consider the subsequent fate of this Chinese apocryphal scripture in the hands of the Buddhists of India and Tibet.

#### *The Heart Sūtra in India and Tibet*

It has long been known that there are numerous Sanskrit manuscript copies of the *Heart Sūtra*, a fact which has obscured until now the Chinese ancestry of the text. But the text did not stop evolving once it had been introduced into the Indian environment. Far from it; like all other Indian Buddhist texts, the *Heart Sūtra* was subjected to a series of additions and changes, the most striking of which was the creation of a distinctive variant of the text popularly known as the “longer” recension.

We have already taken note of the fact that commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Indian authors are clustered in a period from the 8th to the 11th century CE.<sup>93</sup> There is also, however, a clustering of a different sort, for all seven of the surviving commentaries are based on the longer recension of the *sūtra*.<sup>94</sup> And the same is true of the commentaries on the *sūtra* written in Tibet, all of which are based on the longer version of the text. The situation is precisely the reverse, however, in China: here all of the extant commentaries are based not only on the shorter recension of the text, but on a single

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example of that recension – the version attributed to *Hsüan-tsang* (T No. 251).

How can this striking discrepancy be explained? There is certainly no significant doctrinal difference between the two recensions, for the core section of the *sūtra* (in which the basic teachings are given) is identical in the shorter and longer texts. Indeed the only difference is that the “defects” we identified above in our discussion of *Hsüan-tsang's* shorter recension (the absence of the standard opening and closing statements, together with the total non-appearance of the Buddha himself) have been remedied in the longer version, at least in perfunctory fashion. With only such a seemingly minor difference between the two versions, then, why should it be that all the Indian and Tibetan commentaries are based on the longer recension, while all the Chinese commentaries expound on the shorter one?

Not every event in the history of Buddhism, of course, has a single easily identifiable cause. We must not discount the importance of accidents of preservation and popularization: the role of a single charismatic preacher (whose name has long since been lost), for example, in disseminating a particular version of a text could have left an impact which we will never be able to recover. There is, however, at least one identifiable factor which may explain this commentarial pattern: the difference between Chinese and Indian perceptions of what constitutes an authentic Buddhist scripture.

*Scriptural Authenticity: The Chinese View.* The dilemma faced by the early converts to Buddhism in China, confronted by an ever-mounting collection of canonical scriptures (many of which seemed to conflict with one another) arriving almost daily from the Western Regions, has long been familiar to modern scholars. And indeed it was just this seeming jumble of self-proclaimed authoritative works that led to some of the most creative developments in East Asian Buddhism, from the complex *p'an-chiao*<sup>95</sup> systems of Chih-i and some of his predecessors (who tried to incorporate all of these diverse scriptures into a single coherent framework) to the formation of a variety of “one-practice” systems (based on the selection of a

single scripture or practice as most appropriate to the present age) in Kamakura-period Japan.

Yet throughout these quite divergent efforts a single fundamental criterion of authenticity can be discerned: the fact that a Buddhist scripture, to be authentic, must be of Indian origin. And when the composers of apocryphal texts set out to create new scriptures in China or Korea, one of their first concerns (as demonstrated by Robert Buswell<sup>95</sup>) was to include the proper Indian-sounding elements, such as personal names and place names, in order to give their newly minted scriptures the ring of authenticity. In China, in other words, the first criterion of scriptural legitimacy was that of geography, for any text that had no demonstrated Indian pedigree was, on those grounds alone, suspect.

*Scriptural Authenticity: The Indian View.* In India, by contrast, the criterion of geography could hardly be used, for both genuine traditions of the Buddha's own sermons and texts containing much later fabrications emerged in precisely the same geographical milieu. Here other means had to be used to determine whether a given text was indeed the word of the Buddha, and the early Buddhists formulated a series of methods for deciding doubtful cases (to be discussed immediately below). That these means were insufficient for weeding out later claimants to the status of "Buddha-word" (Skt. *buddhavacana*) is amply demonstrated, for the modern scholar, by the fact that a large number of so-called Mahāyāna scriptures, and eventually even certain tantric works, came to be accepted as genuine by substantial portions of the Buddhist community.<sup>96</sup> These were not, of course, accepted without some resistance, and some of the earliest scriptures that eventually came to be associated with the Mahāyāna wing of Buddhism still bear the marks of their struggle for legitimacy.<sup>97</sup>

At least in the early centuries, however, Indian Buddhists had a fairly clear-cut method of evaluating the authenticity of a given text (a method evolved prior to the recording of Buddhist scriptures in written form): it had to agree with the other teachings of the Buddha, on the one hand,<sup>98</sup> and it had to be something "heard" from a

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legitimate source, on the other.<sup>99</sup> It is this latter category, I would argue, that led to the eventual formulation of an implicit single criterion for authenticity: a legitimate *sūtra* had to conform to the sole acceptable format for this genre of Buddhist literature – that is, it had to open with the words "Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord was dwelling at . . .,"<sup>100</sup> and to close with some indication of the reaction of the audience. Everything else – as the Mahāyāna scriptures amply attest – was negotiable.

By this Indian criterion, then, the reason for the clustering of commentarial attention around the long version of the *sūtra* becomes evident. The difference between the shorter and longer versions of the *Heart Sūtra* is – to put it bluntly – that the longer version is a *sūtra*, while the shorter one is not.

In sum, the first order of business, for Indian Buddhists, was to convert the text into acceptable *sūtra* format. Once this had been done, its legitimacy could be established, and the work of commentary-writing could begin. What we see in the longer recension of the *sūtra*, in other words, is the result of the domestication of a Chinese product to fit the demands of the Indian Buddhist market.

*Scriptural Authenticity and the Heart Sūtra in Tibet.* Tibet is, of course, situated midway between India and China, and thus it is not surprising that Tibetan criteria for the genuineness of a Buddhist scripture represent a combination of Indian and Chinese specifications. First and foremost, a legitimate text must come from a certifiably Indian source; and second, it must – in accordance with the sole identifiable Indian criterion – be of the "proper" genre. It is thus quite natural that only the longer version of the *Heart Sūtra* was ever accepted into the Tibetan Buddhist canon, despite the fact that a short version of the text is known to have been extremely popular in the Sino-Tibetan border region of Tun-huang.<sup>101</sup>

But there may be evidence of Chinese, rather than Indian, influence in the pattern of the commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* written in Tibet, for these are apparently clustered into two distinct periods of composition: an earlier group, composed during the Imperial Period (7th-9th centuries CE) and its aftermath, and a later

group, dating from the period of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912).<sup>102</sup> But these are precisely the two periods in Tibetan history when Chinese influence in Tibet was at its peak. In the face of this striking pattern it seems legitimate to raise the question of whether the degree of Tibetan interest in the *Heart Sūtra* may have been directly related to the extent of Tibetan contacts with China. Once again, what we may be seeing here is evidence not of the centrality of the *Heart Sūtra* to Tibetan religious concerns, but of its ongoing importance in China.

### Conclusions

In this paper I have sought to demonstrate, primarily on the basis of philological evidence, that a flow chart of the relationships among the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* can reasonably be drawn in only one sequence: from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* to the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva to the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* popularized by Hsüan-tsang to the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. To assume any other direction of transmission would present insuperable difficulties – or would, at the very least, require postulating a quite convoluted series of processes, which (by virtue of this very convolution) seems considerably less likely to have taken place.

A second level of argument – and one that need not be accepted in order to validate the hypothesis of a Chinese-to-Sanskrit transmission of the *Heart Sūtra* – has been offered in support of the role of Hsüan-tsang in the transmission of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* to India, and perhaps even in the translation of the text into Sanskrit. While the circumstantial evidence of his involvement with the text (and, in particular, of his recitation of the text en route to India) is sufficient to convince this writer that he is the most likely carrier of this *sūtra* to the West, one need not accept this portion of the argument in order to conclude that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is indeed a translation from the Chinese.

What is not open to question, however, is the fact that the *Heart Sūtra* gained significant popularity in China well before it became the subject of commentarial attention in India, and that it has maintained a central role in East Asian Buddhism from the 7th

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century CE down to the present. And even if we accept the idea that the *sūtra* is “apocryphal” in the technical sense – that is, that it was created as a separate scripture in China, composed of an extract from the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva (itself a translation of the Indian *Pañcaviṃśati-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) together with an introduction and conclusion composed in China – this in no way undermines the value that the text has held for Buddhist practitioners. “Whatever is conducive to liberation and not to bondage” – so the Buddha is said to have told his followers – “that is my teaching.”<sup>103</sup> And for millions of East Asian Buddhists, and countless numbers of Indian and Tibetan Buddhists as well, the *Heart Sūtra* has played just such a role.

“The *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya*,” wrote John McRae in the opening line of an article published recently in this journal, “is a Chinese text.”<sup>104</sup> He went on to make it clear that he did not mean this statement to be taken literally, and offered a carefully documented analysis of the centrality of this text in Chinese Buddhist thought and practice and of the variety of ways in which Buddhist commentators had employed it. Yet his words were, in retrospect, prophetic. After many years spent in demythologizing the work both of Buddhist hagiographers and (occasionally) of other Buddhist scholars, I now find myself in the rather unaccustomed position of urging the reader to take this statement in a literal, not a figurative, sense. The *Heart Sūtra* is indeed – in every sense of the word – a Chinese text.

## NOTES

The author would like to thank Gregory Schopen for providing a photocopy and transcription of the relevant section of the Gilgit manuscript of the *Pañcaviṃśatī-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. Extensive comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript were offered by Gil Fronsdal, John McRae, Masatoshi Nagatomi, and Alan Sponberg. Additional comments, suggestions, and good leads were provided by Judith Boltz, Robert Buswell, Paul Harrison, Dan Lusthaus, Elizabeth Napper, Richard Salomon, Jonathan Silk, and Nobuyoshi Yamabe. Michael Saso and David Chappell cheerfully answered my inquiries on a variety of Chinese source-materials; David Eckel and Donald Lopez did the same for texts originating in India and Tibet. Finally, the members of the American Oriental Society (Western Branch) provided the needed encouragement and enthusiasm to propel this paper from its earlier incarnation as a conference talk into its present printed form.

1. Skt. *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* (the word *sūtra* does not appear in the title in any of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts). For a critical edition of the Sanskrit text based on manuscripts found in Nepal, China, and Japan see Edward Conze, "The *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*," in his *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* (London: Bruno Cassirer, 1967), pp. 148-167. (A similar but not identical discussion and edition of the text was published by Conze in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [1948], pp. 38-51; because each contains certain elements not found in the other, the two publications are best used together.) Both short-text (ST, in Conze's terminology) and long-text (LT) recensions of the Sanskrit text are known; Conze has conflated the two in his edition.

A number of versions of the *sūtra* (both ST and LT) are included in the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon, under various titles for the ST see Taishō nos. 250, 251, and 256 (the latter a transliterated Sanskrit version in Chinese characters), and for the LT nos. 252, 253, 254, 255, and 257 (of which no. 255 is a translation from the Tibetan). In working with the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* I have been greatly assisted by an unpublished synoptic edition of all the Chinese versions of the text prepared by Gil Fronsdal.

The Tibetan canon contains only the LT edition, which is ordinarily found in both the *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Tantra* sections of the Kanjur (Derge nos. 21, 531; Narthang nos. 26, 476; Lhasa no. 26, 499), though in the Peking Kanjur the text appears only in the *Tantra* section (no. 160). Numerous copies of a Tibetan ST version, however, have been found at Tun-huang. For the canonical (LT) version a superb critical edition has been prepared by Jonathan Silk, to be published in the near future. The ST Tibetan text is the subject of a study now being prepared for publication by John McRae and myself; in the meantime see a preliminary note on the ST version published by UEYAMA Daijun in *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū*, vol. 26 (1965), pp. 783-779 (where, however, the Tun-huang text has been substantially regularized to conform with the orthographic conventions of Classical

Tibetan). The Mongolian Kanjur, following the format of the Tibetan Peking xylograph edition, includes the *Heart Sūtra* only in the *Tantra* division (Ligeti No. 162).

A Sogdian version of the *Heart Sūtra*, together with a barbarous rendition of the Sanskrit, has been edited by E. Benveniste in *Textes sogdiens*, Part 1 (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1940), pp. 142-144. An incomplete Khotanese version has recently been edited and translated by Prods Oktor Skjærvø; see "The Khotanese *Hṛdayasūtra*" in *A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen*, Acta Iranica, Series 2, No. 28 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 157-171. An Uighur (Turkish) version of the text has recently been discovered in the Berlin Turfan collection, but is as yet unpublished. According to Peter Zieme (cited in Silk, *op. cit.*, p. 71, n. 78) the text is an incomplete manuscript, translated into Uighur from the Chinese but possibly also with reference to the Tibetan.

For additional bibliographical comments see Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, 2nd revised ed. (Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1978), pp. 67-74.

2. See the studies by Conze in his *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* and in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* cited above, note 1. For an English translation and commentary on the text see his *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), pp. 99-129.

3. FUKUI Fumimasa, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1987).

4. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

5. See M. David Eckel, "Indian Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: The Politics of Interpretation," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1987), pp. 69-79, and John R. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: Preliminary Inferences on the Permutation of Chinese Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1988), pp. 87-115.

5a. An additional line, which occurs only in a small minority of Sanskrit manuscripts, has not been translated here. See below, note 19.

6. See Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 56-74.

7. On this formula see John Brough, "Thus have I heard...." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 13 (1950), 416-426.

8. See Lopez, *The Heart Sutra Explained*, p. 7 and n. 14.

9. No instance of the use of mantras or *dhāraṇīs* occurs in what are generally considered to be the earliest *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, viz. the *Ratnagaṇasamācayagāthā* and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. The first appearance of such formulas in this body of literature occurs in the *Pañcaviṃśatī-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (see the following note), where these formulas are arranged in a syllabic sequence known as the *arapaçana*, which is widely attested in documents written or originally composed in the Kharoṣṭhī script (see Richard Salomon, "New Evidence for a

Gāndhārī Origin of the Arapacana Syllabary," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 110, no. 2 [1990], 255-273). The term *mantra* is of course widely used in Indian religions generally, and goes back to the period of the Vedas; the term *dhāraṇī*, by contrast, appears to be a peculiarly Buddhist expression. Though it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between incantations of these two types (and indeed the two categories seem increasingly to fall together over the course of Buddhist history), it would appear that the word *dhāraṇī* was first employed in reference to mnemonic devices used to retain (Skt. *√dhr*, "hold") certain elements of Buddhist doctrine in one's memory, in contrast to the word *mantra* which was used to refer to words or phrases in which the sounds themselves were considered to be highly effective when pronounced correctly. Much basic research still remains to be done on the uses of both mantras and *dhāraṇīs* in Buddhist literature and practice.

10. The name "Large Sūtra" is derived from the title of the most popular Chinese version of the text (discussed immediately below), and has been adopted here for convenience to refer to versions of the *sūtra* in all languages. The Sanskrit title is *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* ("The 25,000-Line Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra"). A Sanskrit text of the so-called "rearranged" version of the text (Conze's type 2a), which was edited in around the 9th century to conform with the format of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Maitreyañātha, has been published by N. Dutt on the basis of very late (c. 19th c.) Nepalese manuscripts; see his *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā, Edited with Critical Notes and an Introduction*, Calcutta Oriental Series No. 28 (London: Luzac & Co., 1934). For the passage corresponding to the core of the *Heart Sūtra* see p. 46, line 2 through p. 47, line 3. A portion of an older (unrearranged, Conze's type 2) Sanskrit version has survived in manuscripts found at Gilgit, dating to around the 6th century CE; these have been published in facsimile by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra, *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*, Parts 3-5, Śatapiṭaka Series, Vol. 103 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966). For the passage corresponding to the core of the *Heart Sūtra* see folio 21v, lines 2-11.

Though the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras are regularly identified in Sanskrit (and in the corresponding Tibetan translations) by the number of lines they are said to contain, in Chinese this convention is not followed. The Taishō edition of the Chinese canon contains four versions of the text: T. nos. 220 (section 2, 7.1a-426a), 221, 222 (a partial translation), and 223. Of these by far the most popular is the translation attributed to Kumārajīva (no. 223); it is titled *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (\**Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, that is, "The Large *Prajñāpāramitā* Sūtra"), and is popularly known simply as the "Large Sūtra."

The sole translation of the text preserved in the Tibetan canon corresponds to the unrearranged Sanskrit version (Conze's type 2); see Peking no. 731, Derge no. 9, Narthang no. 10, and Lhasa no. 10. For the corresponding Mongolian version see Ligeti nos. 758-761.

No manuscript copies of the *Large Sūtra* have yet been identified, to the best

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of my knowledge, in any of the major Buddhist languages of Central Asia (Tokharian A and B, Khotanese, Sogdian and Uighur). Sanskrit fragments of other closely related texts (the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras in 100,000 and 18,000 lines) have, however, been found in Sinkiang; see Lore Sander, "Buddhist Literature in Central Asia," in G. P. Malalasekera, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 4, fasc. 1 (Colombo: Government Press, 1979), pp. 52-75 (especially p. 68).

For further discussion and bibliography see Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 34-40.

11. The first such reference was apparently made in the 7th century (see below, note 33).

12. This line, which is absent from all the Chinese versions of the text, appears in the form cited here (that is, Skt. *rūpaṃ śūnyaṃ śūnyataiva rūpaṃ*) in the majority of extant Sanskrit copies (for details see Conze's critical edition [cited in n. 1 above], p. 150, n. 10) as well as in the Tibetan translation of the longer recension of the *sūtra* (which reads *gzugs stong-pa'o*): Conze, however, preferred the reading "form is emptiness" (*rūpaṃ śūnyatā*) and accordingly chose this version (which constitutes a distinct minority of readings in the manuscript copies) as standard.

13. Here we come to a large rift between the traditional Chinese understanding of this line, on the one hand, and the Tibetan on the other. The Chinese *Heart Sūtra* reads *shih chu fa k'ung hsiang*, "all dharmas [have] the mark [of] emptiness." The Tibetan *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, reads *chos thams-cad stong-pa-nyid-de / mtshan-nyid med-pa* ("all dharmas are emptiness [they are] devoid of marks"). Grammatically the Sanskrit admits of either interpretation; it can be read either as *sarvadharmāḥ śūnyatā-lakṣaṇā* ("all dharmas have the mark of emptiness") or as *sarvadharmāḥ śūnyatā-alakṣaṇā* ("all dharmas are emptiness, [and are] unmarked"). Conze's English translation of the Sanskrit follows the Chinese sense, but without a discussion of the alternative reading.

14. It is noteworthy that both Sanskrit versions of this passage (that is, both the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra*) follow the sequence "not decreasing, not increasing," while both Chinese versions place the word "increasing" (*tseng*) before "decreasing" (*chien*). It is difficult to explain this reversal no matter what direction of textual transmission is postulated. A possible explanation is that the difference is due simply to the established sequences of these terms in the two languages: that is, that in Sanskrit the more natural sequence would be "decreasing-increasing," while the reverse would be true in Chinese (just as in English we normally say "waxing and waning" rather than the reverse, and would tend to follow this sequence even when translating from a language that read "waning and waxing"). An additional factor may be the visual effect of the Chinese characters: by placing the word "decreasing" last, one obtains a sequence of six negations in which items 2, 4 and 6 all contain the "water" radical while items 1, 3 and 5 do not. If one followed instead the sequence found in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* the water radical would not alternate so rhythmically, but would instead appear in items

2, 4 and 5, lending a perhaps less poetic appearance to the list. Both of these suggestions are, however, merely hypothetical.

15. All citations from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* are based on the readings found in the Gilgit manuscript published in facsimile by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra (cited above, note 10); a photocopy and transcription of the passage corresponding to the core section of the *Heart Sūtra* were generously supplied by Gregory Schopen. I have followed Schopen's lead in not regularizing the transcription. Some of the more important scribal errors and variants are discussed in the following notes.

16. The Gilgit manuscript of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* regularly reads *Śāradvatīputra*, while the later Nepalese manuscripts (and the Tibetan translation) read *Śāriputra*. For a discussion of this and other variants of this name see André Migot, "Un grand disciple du Buddha Śāriputra," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 56 (1954), 405-554 (p. 411).

17. See above, note 12.

18. The Gilgit manuscript regularly reads *śūnyatā* where one would expect *śūnyatā*.

19. The sentences *yad rūpam sā śūnyatā yā śūnyatā tad rūpam* ("that which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness is form") are absent from a substantial majority of the Sanskrit manuscripts reviewed by Conze in his critical edition, as well as from the canonical (LT) Tibetan translation, though they do appear in the Tun-huang manuscript copies (ST), where they are rendered into Tibetan as *gag gzugs-pa de stong-pa-nyid // gag stong-pa-nyid-pa de gzug-te* [sic]. Accordingly, I have omitted these lines from the English translation of the Sanskrit given above (p. 155).

20. This line ("not past, not future, [and] not present") is found in both the Gilgit manuscript and Dutt's late Nepalese copies of the *Large Sūtra*, as well as in the Chinese translations of the text. It is absent, however, from all versions of the *Heart Sūtra* (in all languages) except the Chinese version attributed to Kumārajīva, a text whose attribution is extremely problematic. For further discussion see below, pp. 184-189 and notes 71-73.

21. Note that the *Heart Sūtra* reads *spraśṭavya* while the *Large Sūtra* has *sparśa*. In this context (that is, in the list of *āyatanas* and *dhātus*) the reading *spraśṭavya* ("touchable") is more standard than *sparśa* ("touch"); see Bruce Hall, *Vasubandhu on "Aggregates, Spheres, and Components": Being Chapter One of the "Abhidharmakośa"*, Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1983, p. 62 (I, §9a-b) and p. 80 (I, §14a-b).

22. The *Heart Sūtra* regularly reads *caḥśurdhātu* where the *Large Sūtra* has *caḥśudhātu*.

23. Where the Gilgit text reads *na satvāyatanam na satvāyatananirodham* ("no being-*āyatanas* and no extinction of being-*āyatanas*") Dutt's edition has *na śaḍāyatanā na śaḍāyatananirodha* ("no six *āyatanas* and no extinction of the six *āyatanas*"), which is the more expected reading.

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24. While the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* negates attainment (*prāpti*) and realization (*abhisamaya*), most Sanskrit manuscript copies of the *Heart Sūtra* place the term *prāpti* second rather than first and negate knowledge (*jñāna*) rather than realization. In this respect the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* matches both the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and the Chinese *Large Sūtra* translation of Kumārajīva, where the corresponding terms are *chih\** and *tc.\*\**

25. The Sanskrit text of the *Large Sūtra* edited by Dutt (based on considerably later manuscripts) is even more repetitive, demonstrating the ongoing amplification that has continued throughout the life of the text.

26. The shift from singular forms (in the *Large Sūtra*) to plurals (in the *Heart Sūtra*) is paralleled by a change of subject in the Sanskrit texts, from "emptiness" (in the *Large Sūtra*) to "all *dharmas*" (in the *Heart Sūtra*). This change, however, seems easiest to explain as the result of a transition that took place in the course of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Large Sūtra* from Sanskrit into Chinese. While the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* reads "that which is emptiness does not originate" and so on, the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva reads "all *dharmas* are marked by emptiness: not originated" and so on, wording which the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang follows exactly. In this context, without an explicit subject in the Chinese text, the reader would most naturally assume that the subject is "all *dharmas*" – which is exactly what we find in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. (For the Chinese and Sanskrit texts see above, pp. 159 and 162, respectively.)

27. See Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 10-12.

28. The earliest complete Chinese version of the *Large Sūtra* was translated by Mokṣala (T No. 221) in 291 CE, though a partial translation was produced by Dharmarakṣa in 286 CE (T No. 222). The version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang is said to have been translated in 649 CE, while Kumārajīva's version is dated to 402-412 CE. Both of these attributions are, however, extremely problematic; for details see below, pp. 184-191.

29. On the date of the Indian commentaries see Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, pp. 4 and 8-13, and Eckel, "Indian Commentaries," p. 71.

30. Commentaries attributed to Nāgārjuna (but certainly not by him) and to Maitreyanāthā (whose identity is likewise problematic) both appear by the early 5th century CE, the former in China and the latter in India. For details see Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 35-36 and 39-40.

31. The classic statement of differences between Chinese and Indian preferences is given by Tao-an\* in his *Preface to an Abstract of the Prajñā Sūtras* (382 CE), where he enumerates five deviations (Ch. *wu shih pen\*\**) and three non-alterations (*san pu \*\*\**) in Chinese translations from Indian originals. For a discussion of these eight categories and whether Tao-an viewed any or all of them as permissible deviations from the Indian originals see Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (1967; rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), pp. 77-88. For a convenient discussion of Chinese Buddhist translation practices in general see also Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 365-372. As Ch'en notes, despite the scholastically superior innovations of Hsüan-tsang and others "the principles advocated by Kumārajīva finally won supremacy" (p. 372).

32. An exception to this rule is Hsüan-tsang, whose scholastic scruples won out over his awareness of Chinese literary preferences, resulting in translations which – while prized by certain scholars for their accuracy – never gained widespread favor among Chinese Buddhists. A poignant account of Hsüan-tsang's struggle between his awareness of Chinese literary preferences (as pointed out to him by, among others, his students) and his desire for faithfulness to the Sanskrit original is contained in his biography, as recorded by Hui-li:

On the first day of the first month in the spring of the fifth year (A.D. 660), he started the translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* [Skt. *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*]. . . . Since it was such an extensive work, his disciples suggested that he should make an abridgement of it. The Master complied with their wishes and intended to translate it in the way as Kumārajīva translated the Buddhist texts, expunging the tedious and repetitionary parts. When he cherished this thought he dreamed in the night some very terrible things as a warning to him. He dreamed that he was climbing over a precipitous peak and some wild animal was trying to catch him. He trembled with perspiration and managed to escape from the dangerous position. After awakening he related his evil dream to the people and decided to translate the *sūtra* in full text. In that night then he dreamed to see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas emitting a light from the middle of their eyebrows, shining over his body and making him feel comfortable and happy. . . . When he awoke he felt happy, and he thought no more of making any abridgement but made the translation in exact accordance with the original Sanskrit text.

(English translation from LI Yung-hsi, trans., *The Life of Hsüan-tsang* [Peking: The Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959], pp. 260-261).

33. See T. No. 1710, 33.524a25-b1, where K'uei-chi writes as follows:

"*Hsin*" [lit.: heart or core] refers to what is firm and substantial, yet subtle and exalted. In accord with the capacity of its [original] audience, the *Large Sūtra* has a meaning and content of expansive breadth. When we, however, receive it, grasp it, transmit it and study it, it gives rise to a sense of timorous retreat. The sages who transmitted the Dharma therefore published this [*Heart Sūtra*] separately to record the firm and substantial, yet subtle and exalted purport [of the *Large Sūtra*]. The traditional three divisions and dual introduction [of that work] were consequently truncated in order better to formulate its essence and highlight its guiding themes: [the teaching that] things, occurring in their myriad representations, all have form, yet are all empty as well. The Way allows a thousand gateways, yet all pass through non-wisdom to attain

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realization of both [the form and the emptiness of all things]. This *sūtra* assays the marvelous purport of the expanded scripture signalling its substance, and thus it is given the name *Heart* [of the Perfection of Wisdom].

(translation by Alan Sponberg, in a paper to appear in a volume of translated commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*, edited by Donald Lopez). The most striking feature of K'uei-chi's description of the *Heart Sūtra*, for our purposes, is the statement that the *Heart Sūtra* was "published separately" by "the sages who transmitted the Dharma" – not "preached separately" by the Buddha himself. Such a statement by Hsüan-tsang's own student (who was also, as Sponberg points out, the author of the earliest extant commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*) carries significant weight, and seems to be seconded by the comparison made by Wōnch'ūik, another of Hsüan-tsang's disciples, between the *Heart Sūtra* and the Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara) chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which was likewise part of a larger text but was extracted and circulated separately (see T No. 1711, 33.543b). In sum, the statements of both K'uei-chi and Wōnch'ūik indicate that at least some Chinese Buddhists, already in the 7th century CE, considered the *Heart Sūtra* to be not a separate sermon preached by the Buddha, but an extract made by certain "sages who transmitted the Dharma" from the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva.

34. For the Mongolian text see Ligeti no. 1105, *Qutuy-tu asaraqui neretii sudur* (Mongolian Kanjur vol. 90, *eldeb* XXXI), folio 437b and *passim*. The Mongolian version is a translation of the Tibetan text titled '*Phags-pa byams-pa'i mdo zhes-bya-ba* (Peking no. 1010, Narthang no. 328, Lhasa no. 349; the text is not included in the Derge edition). The Sanskrit title appears in Tibetan transcription as *Ārya-maitrī-sūtra*; one would have expected it to read instead \**Ārya-maitreya-sūtra*. The fact that both *Maitreya* and *maitrī* are regularly translated into Tibetan as *byams-pa* suggests that this Sanskrit title is not original, but was reconstructed by the Tibetans. No Sanskrit version of the text has survived; there is, however, a Pali edition of this peculiar text, which represents an amalgamation of a prophecy concerning the future Buddha Maitreya (Pali *Metteyya*) in verse, and a prose commentary by Buddhaghosa on the *Anguttara-nikāya*. For further details see Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), p. 56 and n. 81. In the other Mongolian version of the same text (Ligeti No. 783, corresponding to Peking no. 751) the name of Maitreya's city is simply translated into Mongolian.

35. The term *blo-gros* "mind" is, however, the equivalent of Skt. *matī* (id.), not of *-matī* (which occurs regularly in the Sanskrit version of the name Ketumātī). The latter is presumably a feminine form of the suffix *-mat* "having, possessed of." The name of the city thus seems to have meant "the one (f.) possessing a flag," not – as the Tibetans interpreted it – "flag-mind."

36. The various Mongolian-Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries employed by the Mongols in translating Buddhist texts from the Tibetan are discussed in detail in



Vladimir Leonidovich Uspensky, "Buddiiskaya terminologiya v mongol'skom perevode. Istochniki dlya izucheniya i puti formirovaniya" ["Buddhist Terminology in Mongolian Translation. Sources for their Study and their Means of Formation"] (unpublished M.A. thesis, Leningrad University, 1981), pp. 8-27. One of the most important of these texts is the Mongolian version of the Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary known as the *Mahāvvyutpatti*; see Alice Šarkózi, "Some Words on the Mongolian *Mahāvvyutpatti*," *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), vol. 34 (1980), pp. 219-234.

37. Even the name of one of the *dhātus* is given differently in these two texts (see above, note 21).

38. See above, p. 166 and n. 29.

39. According to a story recently quoted in a number of English-language studies (e.g., Eckel, "Indian Commentaries," p. 70, and Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, p. 13), one of the stories collected by Hsüan-tsang on his visit to India was that of the Buddhist philosopher Bhavaviveka, who is said to have recited the *Heart Sūtra* in order to conjure up a vision of the *bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*. If this story were true, it would provide evidence of the use of the *Heart Sūtra* in India well before Hsüan-tsang's visit in the first half of the 7th century. This assertion, however, which is based on the account given in Samuel Beal's translation of the *Hsi-yü ch'ü*<sup>4d</sup> (*Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* [1884; rpt. New York: Paragon Reprint Corp., 1968], vol. 2, pp. 223-225) is a figment of Beal's translation; the text in question is not the *Heart Sūtra* at all, but an entirely different work of which certain characters in the Chinese title are identical with those in the title of the *Heart Sūtra* (viz., the "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva Wish-Granting Dhāraṇī Sūtra," Ch. *Kuan-tzu-tsai p'u-sa tan-fo sui-hsin t'o-lo-ni ching*,<sup>4e</sup> T No. 1103b, translated by Chih-t'ung<sup>4f</sup> c. 650 CE).

Another oft-cited piece of evidence for the early currency of the *Heart Sūtra* in India is the existence of a Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript of the *sūtra* kept at the Hōryūji temple in Japan and supposedly brought from China to Japan in 609 CE. This assertion first appeared in the works of F. Max Müller, and has subsequently been widely quoted in Western-language sources (e.g., Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 155). Here Müller was misled by his Japanese research assistants, who reported to him that a date for the arrival of the *sūtra* in Japan corresponding to 609 CE appears in a Japanese source (see F. Max Müller, ed., *Buddhist Texts from Japan* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881], pp. 4-5). Indeed it does; but the source in question, a local chronicle titled *Ikaruga koji benran*<sup>4g</sup> ("Memorandum on Ancient Matters of Ikaruga"), composed in 1836, is entirely unreliable on matters of ancient chronology; to cite only one example, it asserts that together with the palm-leaf *Heart Sūtra* the mission that arrived in Japan in 609 brought (*inter alia*) a robe and a bowl belonging to Bodhidharma, items that acquired symbolic importance in Chinese Ch'an only during and after the time of Shen-hui<sup>4h</sup> (684-758 CE). Such a tradition, in other words, could only have been formulated around 730 CE at the earliest, and thus the assertion that Bodhidharma's

robe and bowl reached Japan in 609 CE is patently false, making the parallel claim that the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript was brought by the same mission quite useless as evidence. In the absence of any other source that could provide a concrete date for the arrival of this manuscript in Japan (and accordingly a *terminus ante quem* for its copying in India), we may provisionally accept the evidence (admittedly always tentative) provided by the shape of the letters in the manuscript itself: as G. Bühler asserts in the same volume (Müller, *Buddhist Texts from Japan*, p. 90), "If we had no historical information [a reference to the *Ikaruga* chronicle] regarding the age of the Horiuzi palm-leaves, every palaeographer, I believe, would draw from the above facts the inference that [the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript] belonged to the beginning of the eighth century A.D." Constrained by what he believed was a concrete date for the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript, Bühler went on to use that text to re-evaluate the history of Indian palaeography (pp. 90-95); as we can see, however, such contortions were not necessary, and the appropriate move would have been the reverse.

40. See McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," pp. 93-94 and p. 109, n. 23. I have retained the full form of the name "K'uei-chi" for ease of identification. The validity of this usage has been questioned, however, by Stanley Weinstein; see his "A Biographical Study of Tz'u-en," *Monumenta Nipponica* 15, 1-2 (1959), pp. 119-149.

41. For references see above, note 1.

42. On the tenuousness of the attribution of this text to Kumārajīva see McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 88 and p. 106, n. 6; for the supposed Hsüan-tsang translation see Fukui, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū*, p. 188. (Fukui does not, however, question this attribution.) The fact that this famous text is attributed to these two illustrious translators for the first time only several centuries (in the case of Kumārajīva) or several decades (in the case of Hsüan-tsang) after their deaths, while no such translation is mentioned in contemporary biographical accounts of either of them, casts considerable doubt on the validity of these attributions.

43. The story of Hsüan-tsang's receipt of the text becomes ever more detailed in the course of its transmission, acquiring evidently hagiographic elements along the way. In the *Chen-yüan hsün-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*<sup>4i</sup> edited by Yüan-chao,<sup>4j</sup> for example, Hsüan-tsang receives the text not from a sick man, but from a "spirit person" or "divine man" (*shen jen*<sup>4k</sup>) (T No. 2157, 55.893c-894a), while in the novelized version of Hsüan-tsang's journey the anonymous donor has acquired a concrete identity as the "Crow's Nest Ch'an Master" of Pagoda Mountain, described by Hsüan-tsang as a *bodhisattva* (see Anthony Yü, trans., *Monkey* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977], vol. 1, pp. 392-394). For the earliest version of this story, as related by Hui-li,<sup>4l</sup> see below, p. 179.

44. Hsüan-tsang's biography states that he acquired the text during his sojourn in Szechwan, a visit which took place during c. 618-622 CE, while the earliest evidence for the presence of the *sūtra* in India – the commentary attributed

to Kamalaśīla – dates from around the end of the 8th century CE (see Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, pp. 4 and 11).

45. The first and third of these items are corrected, at least in perfunctory fashion, in the longer recension of the text, while the Buddha makes a brief appearance there as well; yet it is quite clear that the shorter recension is older, and is thus the version which should be of primary concern to us in our inquiry into the origins of the text. For a discussion of the relation between the shorter and longer recensions of the text see below, pp. 194 - 197.

46. See Robert E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea: The Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 16-17.

47. Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, p. 201-207. It may well be the fact that the *Heart Sūtra* was originally produced for ritual use – that is, for use as a *dhāraṇī* to be chanted – that accounts for the peculiar absence of a single line found in Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* (and the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Large Sūtra* as well) from all extant versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, in all languages, with a single exception to be discussed immediately below: that is, the line that reads "[empty *dharma*s] are not past, not future, not present" (T 8.223a16; for the corresponding Sanskrit text see Dutt, *Pañcaviṃśati*, p. 46, line 11). While all the surrounding materials in this section are arranged in groups of two, this line alone contains three elements. Thus it is possible (though this is admittedly far from certain) that this line was omitted from the text as it was excerpted and transformed into a *dhāraṇī* because this three-part arrangement would have interrupted the rhythm used in chanting. If this line of reasoning is correct, the fact that the so-called "Kumārajīva translation" does include this line (in agreement with Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* and his *Ta chih-tu lun*<sup>m</sup> but in disagreement with all other versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, in any language) may provide additional evidence that the so-called Kumārajīva text has a separate (and aberrant) history – that is, that it was excerpted from the *Ta chih-tu lun* after a Chinese version of the *Heart Sūtra* resembling that attributed to Hsüan-tsang was already in circulation.

48. Another possibility, suggested by Robert Buswell in a letter dated 21 January 1992, is that the *Heart Sūtra* might be a kind of *ch'ao-ching* ("condensed *sūtra*"), "a fairly common genre of scriptural writing in early Chinese Buddhism, which excerpted seminal passages from the Mahāyāna *sūtras* to create easily digestible 'gists' of these texts." (For a discussion of this genre see Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues," in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, pp. 31-74, especially p. 39.) If this line of interpretation is followed, the term *hsin-ching* might be understood – as Buswell suggests – not as *dhāraṇī* (as Fukui would have it) but as "gist *sūtra*," a reading more in line with traditional exegesis.

49. For a recent discussion of the mantra of the *Heart Sūtra* see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., "Inscribing the Bodhisattva's Speech: On the *Heart Sūtra*'s Mantra," *History of Religions*, vol. 29 [1990], pp. 351-372.

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50. TSUKAMOTO Zenryū has noted, based on a study of the iconography of the Lung-men caves in northern China, a shift from Śākyamuni and Maitreya as the primary figures in Buddhist iconography during the late Northern Wei dynasty and after (c. 500-540 CE) to a focus on Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara at a later time (c. 650-720); for an English summary of his study see Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 171-172. In fact the emergence of Avalokiteśvara as a dominant figure appears to take place even earlier – around 530 CE – based on the data assembled by Tsukamoto. Avalokiteśvara's popularity has continued to increase since that time, and he (or she) has remained the most prominent *bodhisattva* in China until today.

51. It is difficult to find textual support for this assertion, which is admittedly based on anecdotal evidence both from traditional written sources and from modern scholars specializing in Chinese Buddhism. Nonetheless, it seems to be a fair characterization of the situation in these two societies, where Avalokiteśvara remained one *bodhisattva* among many in India, on the one hand, while attaining the status at least of first-among-equals in China, on the other.

52. See McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 107, n. 10. The text to which McRae refers is the *T'o-lo-ni chi ching*<sup>m</sup> (T. No. 901, 18.785a-897b); for the mantra of the *Heart Sūtra* see p. 807b20-21. It is noteworthy that this *dhāraṇī* catalogue offers not one but three *hsin t'o-lo-n*<sup>m</sup> ("heart *dhāraṇī*s") associated with the Perfection of Wisdom; for the complete list see 18.807b19-c9. Still other *dhāraṇī*s associated with the Perfection of Wisdom are given on the preceding pages (18.804c-807b).

53. Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, p. 192, referring to the *Ta-fang-teng wu-hsiang ching*<sup>m</sup> (Skt. *Mahāmegha-sūtra*, T No. 387) and the *Tung-fang tsui-sheng teng-want t'o-lo-ni ching*<sup>m</sup> (Skt. *Agrapradīpadhāraṇīvidyārāja*, T No. 1353). No page references are given in Fukui's study, but the passages to which he refers are presumably T 12.1084c7 and c12 and T 21.867c12 and c22, respectively. While neither of these passages contains a full replication of the mantra found in the *Heart Sūtra*, the striking similarities between them suggests that a number of variants of this mantra must have been circulating outside the context of the *Heart Sūtra* itself. Though T No. 1353 was translated into Chinese only toward the end of the 6th century, T No. 387 was translated by Dharmakṣema early in the 5th century (during the period 414-421 according to the *Ku-chin i-ching t'u-chin*,<sup>p</sup> T No. 2151, 55.360b24).

54. It is also possible, of course, that the mantra was circulating in oral form, in Szechwan and perhaps also elsewhere in China.

54a. Just as this paper was going to press, I received word from two colleagues of a number of occurrences of the list of epithets of the mantra (*chou* or *ming-chou*) in other Chinese texts. (Here I must beg the reader's indulgence for the absence of Chinese characters for the terms mentioned in this footnote; it was not possible to add to the glossary at this late stage in the publication process.) The closest correspondence (indeed, an exact one) is found in the *Chin-kang san-mei ching* (\* *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*), which reads *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta shen-chou, shih*

ta ming-chou, shih wu-shang chou, shih wu-teng-teng chou (T No. 273, 9.371b12-14), a word-for-word match to the epithets lists (though not to the spelling of *prajñāpāramitā*) found in the version of the *Heart Sūtra* associated with Hsüan-tsang (T No. 251, 8.14-15). Given the late date of this sūtra (685 CE according to Buswell), however, and its originally Korean provenance, it seems certain that this passage did not provide the inspiration for the corresponding section of the *Heart Sūtra*, but quite the opposite: that is, the composer of the *Vajrasamādhi* borrowed these lines from the by then quite popular *Heart Sūtra* (as suggested in Buswell, *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology*, p. 22 and n. 28; I would like to thank Gil Fronsdal for bringing this discussion to my attention).

Of considerably greater interest, therefore, are a number of similar occurrences that clearly date from well before Hsüan-tsang's time. This group of passages, recently identified by Nobuyoshi Yamabe (who kindly sent me notice of his findings in letters dated 1 October 1992 and 7 November 1992), includes the following:

- (1) *Kuan-fo san-mei hai ching* ("The Sūtra of the Samādhi-Sea of Buddha Visualization," tr. c. 420-422 CE by Buddhahadra; T No. 643, 15.647b4-6): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou, shih wu-shang chou, wu-teng-teng chou*. No Sanskrit version of this text is known.
- (2) *Hsiao-p'in po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, tr. 408 CE by Kumārajīva; T No. 227, 8.543b25-27 and repeated in 28-29): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou, po-jo po-lo-mi shih wu-shang chou, po-jo po-lo-mi shih wu-teng-teng chou*. The corresponding Sanskrit passage reads *mahāvidyeyaṃ Kauśikayad uta prajñāpāramitā | apramāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | aparimāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | niruttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | anuttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asamasameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā* (from P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, p. 36, line 30 - p. 37, line 7; cf. Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, pp. 108-109). As the reader will note, the extant Sanskrit text is considerably more repetitive than is Kumārajīva's version.
- (3) *Ta-p'in po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (*Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, tr. 404 CE by Kumārajīva; T No. 223, 8.283b9-10): *shih po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou shih wu-shang ming-chou* (cf. Conze, *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, p. 229). No corresponding Sanskrit text of the *Pañcaviṃśati* is easily available for comparison (Dutt's published edition of the Nepalese version ends with Chapter 21, while this citation occurs in Chapter 28; and the corresponding section of the text is missing from the Gilgit manuscripts according to Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, 2nd ed., pp. 34-37).

In addition Yamabe has located a number of parallel passages in the translations

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of Hsüan-tsang himself (T 7.151a29-b3, 156a17-19, 551b10-13, 556a23-25, 580b27-29, 580c4-6, and 875a3-4).

To Yamabe's substantial list may now be added two further occurrences in Kumārajīva's translations (cf. nos. 2 and 3 above), located by this writer as a direct result of Yamabe's findings:

- (4) *Hsiao-p'in* (tr. Kumārajīva, T No. 227): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta chou-shu, wu-shang chou-shu* (T 8.542b5-6). The corresponding Sanskrit passage reads *mahāvidyeyaṃ Kauśika yad uta prajñāpāramitā | apramāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | aparimāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | anuttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asameyaṃ Kauśika [vidyā] yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asamasameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, p. 27, lines 29-32; cf. Conze, *Eight Thousand*, p. 104). Note that Kumārajīva's text is not consistent in its rendering of the word *vidyā* "lore, knowledge, spell"; in (2) above it appears as *ming-chou* (or simply *chou*), while here it is translated as *chou-shu* "mantric art."
- (5) *Ta-p'in* (tr. Kumārajīva, T No. 223): *shih po-jo po-lo-mi...shih ta ming-chou, wu-shang ming-chou, wu-teng-teng ming-chou* (T 8.286c2-3; cf. Conze, *The Large Sūtra*, p. 237). No published Sanskrit text is available for comparison (cf. (3) above).

These examples (and there may well be others) are quite sufficient to demonstrate that there were ample prototypes available in China for the creation of an epithets lists such as the one contained in the *Heart Sūtra*.

Even more important, however, is yet another observation offered by Mr. Yamabe: that the underlying Sanskrit term (where extant texts are available for comparison) corresponding to Ch. *chou* is not *mantra* (as in the *Heart Sūtra*) but *vidyā* — thus supplying us with yet another example of back-translation. The Sanskrit term *vidyā*, in other words, was originally translated into Chinese as *ming-chou* (or simply *chou*); but after a passage containing this term was incorporated into the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, it was then back-translated into Sanskrit using the partially synonymous term *mantra*.

55. The Chinese term *shen* is sometimes used to translate Sanskrit *ṛddhi*, "supernatural power," and, less commonly, *deva*, "god." Neither of these renderings would, however, have been appropriate in the present context. My assumption is that the person who translated the text into Sanskrit simply chose not to include an equivalent of this character.

56. The majority of Conze's Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts, for example, add the word *prāpnoti* ("he attains") following the phrase *niṣṭhā-nirvāṇa* (see Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 152 and n. 44), as does the Tibetan (LT) translation, which reads *mya-ngan-las 'das-pa'i mthar phyin-to* ("he attains to the end [which is] *nirvāṇa*"). Likewise Conze finds it necessary to supplement

this cryptic phrase with additional words in his English translation, where he renders it as "in the end he attains to nirvāṇa."

57. The ear in question is not my own but that of Richard Salomon, who kindly drew this infelicity to my attention.

58. On the Sanskrit LT recension and its Chinese and Tibetan translations see below, pp. 194-197 and note 65.

59. Li, *Life of Hsüan-tsang*, p. 23.

60. *Loc. cit.*

61. See Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 53.

62. On these and other apocryphal texts created in China see Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, especially pp. 1-29.

63. See Buswell, *Vajrasamādhi*, especially pp. 3-40.

64. For a preliminary discussion of this issue see Jan Nattier, "Church Language and Vernacular Language in Central Asian Buddhism," *Numen*, vol. 37 (1990), pp. 195-219.

65. Long versions of the *sūtra* contained in the Taishō canon are T No. 252 (translated by Dharmacandra in 741 CE), No. 253 (Prajñā, 790 CE), No. 254 (Prajñācakra, 861 CE), No. 255 (Fa-ch'eng, 856 CE, from the Tibetan), and No. 257 (Dānapāla, 1005 CE). Short versions are T No. 250 (attributed to Kumārajīva), No. 251 (attributed to Hsüan-tsang), and No. 256 (a transliterated version of the Sanskrit text in Chinese characters, for which no clear attribution is given).

66. For a discussion of these titles see John McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 88 and notes 4-7, and FUKUI Fumimasa, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū*, pp. 171-185.

67. Although Tao-an's catalogue was not completed until 374 CE, it is generally considered to include only those works available in China through the beginning of the 4th century. For a convenient summary of the current state of our knowledge of this and other catalogues of Chinese Buddhist scriptures see Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues" (cited above, n. 48).

68. For further discussion see McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 106, notes 5 and 6.

69. Kumārajīva's translation was completed in 404 CE.

70. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 89 and n. 9. For another example of the use of the section of the *Large Sūtra* which would eventually be extracted to form the core of the *Heart Sūtra* in the commentary literature prior to the time of Hsüan-tsang see Chih-i's *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, T No. 1911, 46.5b20.

71. According to Fukui (*op. cit.*, p. 177) this text is attributed to Kumārajīva for the first time in the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lü* (730 CE). Cf. McRae, *op. cit.*, p. 89 and n. 9.

72. Fukui, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

73. These characters in turn are clearly patterned on a passage found at this

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point in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, which reads (in Conze's translation) "because the emptiness of form does not molest [*sic*], the emptiness of feeling does not feel, the emptiness of perception does not perceive, the emptiness of impulses does not put together, the emptiness of consciousness is not aware" (Skt. *tathāhi yā rūpaśūnyatā na sā rūpayatī yā vedanāśūnyatā na sā vedayatī yā saṃjñāśūnyatā na sā saṃjñāntī | yā saṃskāraśūnyatā na sābhisamkarotī yā vijñānaśūnyatā na sā vijñāntī*). For the English text see Conze, *The Large Sūtra*, p. 61; for the Sanskrit see Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 45, line 14 - p. 46, line 2.

74. Fukui, *loc. cit.*

75. I would like to thank Prof. Masatoshi Nagatomi of Harvard University for drawing my attention to the *Ta chih-tu lun*<sup>m</sup> in this connection, and for raising the question of the significance of this divergence in phrasing. The reading found in the *Ta chih-tu lun* also occurs in some of the more recent editions of Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* consulted by the Taishō editors (viz., the Sung, Yüan and Ming editions, as well as the *K'ai-pao* [Old Sung] edition). My working assumption, at this point, is that these relatively late editions reflect an editorial emendation introduced on the authority of the *Ta chih-tu lun* itself.

76. See T 8.848c4-5 and 8.223a13, respectively.

77. See T 8.847c7-8 and 25.327c22, respectively.

78. T No. 2154, 55.513a4.

79. McRae, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

80. See above, p. 179. The sole exception to this rule appears (at first glance) to be the commentary by Kūkai (T No. 2203a), who claims to be writing on the basis of Kumārajīva's version of the text. A close examination of the actual content of Kūkai's commentary, however, reveals that it is Hsüan-tsang's version, not the text attributed to Kumārajīva, that served as its basis.

81. T No. 220, comprising the totality of volumes 5-7 of the Taishō edition.

82. Other respects in which T No. 250 differs from T No. 251 include the rendition of Skt. *prajñāpāramitā* as *po-jo po-lo-mi*<sup>n</sup> in the former (vs. *po-jo po-lo-mi-to*<sup>m</sup> in the latter), the rendering of the term *bodhisattva* in one instance as *p'u-t'i-sa-to*<sup>m</sup> in the latter (but never in the former, which consistently has the standard Chinese reading *p'u-sa*<sup>m</sup>); differences between certain characters used in the transliteration of the mantra at the end of the *sūtra* (see T 8.847c20-21 and 848c18-19, respectively); and the use of the term *hsin*<sup>n</sup> "heart" or rather - as Fukui has argued - "*dhāraṇī*" in the title of the latter, where the former reads *ming chou*<sup>m</sup> ("bright incantation").

83. The only translators in whose works these three terms (*Kuan-tzu-tai*<sup>n</sup>, *Shê-li-tzu*<sup>n</sup>, and *yü*<sup>n</sup>) regularly appear in the forms found in the version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang (T No. 251) are Divākara (fl. 680-688), Bodhiruci II (fl. 693-727), Amoghavajra (fl. 723-774), \*Devasānti, a.k.a. \*Dharmabhadra (fl. 980-1000), Dānapāla (fl. 928-1017), Dharmapāla (fl. 1004-1058), and of course Hsüan-tsang himself. Not one of these translators, however, predates the work of Hsüan-tsang; thus it seems quite probable that these terms

– all of which represent scholastic innovations designed to replace other, already well-established expressions – were introduced by Hsüan-tsang himself. (The only exceptions to this chronological pattern are two works attributed to Bodhiruci I, fl. c. 508-540, one containing the term *yün*<sup>sp</sup> [T No. 675] and another using the name *Kuan-tzu-tsa*<sup>sp</sup> [T No. 587]. Elsewhere in the works of this earlier Bodhiruci, however, the expressions *yir*<sup>sp</sup> and *Kuan-shih-yir*<sup>sp</sup> are consistently used instead; one therefore suspects that in these two instances either some textual corruption has taken place or there has been some confusion with Bodhiruci's later namesake.)

84. It is noteworthy that even Hsüan-tsang's own disciples, K'uei-chi<sup>3</sup> and Wönc'h'ük,<sup>4</sup> tended to retain the reading *Kuan-shih-yir*<sup>sp</sup> rather than *Kuan-tzu-tsa*<sup>sp</sup> as the name of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, even while they followed their master's lead in adopting new readings for *Śāriputra* and *skandha*.

85. See T No. 256, based on the Tun-huang manuscript now catalogued as Stein 2464. For a recent discussion of this text see Leon Hurvitz, "Hsüan tsang (602-664) and the *Heart Scripture*," in Lewis Lancaster, ed., *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977), pp. 103-121. Two minor corrections should now be made to the transcription of the Sanskrit text given there: on p. 111, line 1, the word *sūnyam* has been omitted in typesetting before the word *sūnyataiva* (see T 8.851b29); and on p. 112, line 2, the five characters read by Hurvitz as *na siddhitvād* are probably intended to represent the expression *nāstivād* instead (see T 8.852a8). A complete romanization of the transliterated Chinese text, based on the Tun-huang manuscript versions, may now be found in Fukui, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-138.

86. The version of the text that served as the basis of the Taishō edition is Stein No. 2464. Fukui has recently drawn attention, however, to the existence of two other Tun-huang manuscript copies (Stein 5648 and Pelliot 2322); see Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, pp. 98-99.

87. Leon Hurvitz, "Hsüan tsang (602-664) and the *Heart Scripture*," p. 108.

88. See Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, especially pp. 92-115.

89. This is also true of both Tibetan versions of the text (ST and LT), as well as of all extant Chinese versions of the text except T Nos. 250, 251, and 254.

90. Without discussing the discrepancies between the transliterated and translated versions, Fukui suggests that the transliterated version corresponds to the text obtained by Hsüan-tsang before his trip to the West, popularly known as the "Kuan-yin-given version" (p. 93).

91. The character *mi*<sup>sp</sup> was pronounced with a final *-t* in T'ang-period Chinese, and thus was able to stand alone as an equivalent of final *-mitā* in the term *prajñāpāramitā* (see Bernard Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* [1923; rpt. New York: Dover, 1974], no. 617, and cf. the Japanese pronunciation of the same character as *mitsu*). For the pronunciation of the final character in the title of T No. 251 as *ta* in T'ang-period Chinese see Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary*, no. 1006.

92. See above, pp. 182-184.

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93. See above, p. 166 and note 29. It is striking that not a single one of these commentaries is preserved either in an extant Sanskrit text or in a Chinese translation; commentaries attributed to Indian authors appear only in the Tibetan canon, and a number of them may in fact have been composed in Tibet. (For further details see below, notes 94 and 102.) All the commentaries preserved in the Chinese canon, by contrast (T Nos. 1710-1714, plus Nos. 2746-2747 [classified as "apocryphal" in the Taishō canon] and 2202-2204 [composed by Japanese authors]), are the works of East Asian authors.

94. See Peking nos. 5217-5223 and Derge nos. 3818-3823. (Note that the Derge edition of the Tibetan canon lacks any equivalent of Pek. No. 5221, titled *Shes-rab-kyi pha-tol-tu phyin-pa'i snying-po shes-bya-ba 'grel-pa*, the commentary on the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kamalāśīla.)

95. Buswell, *Vajrasamādhi*, pp. 16-17.

96. That not even the Mahāyāna *sūtras* were ever accepted as legitimate by a majority of Indian Buddhists is, however, amply attested, for example in the travel account composed by Hsüan-tsang. According to Hsüan-tsang's calculations, fewer than 50% of the Buddhist monks he encountered on his journey were Mahāyānists (this in the middle of the 7th century CE). For a convenient summary of his census figures see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958; rpt. 1967), pp. 596-601.

97. See for example Conze's translation of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* (Skt. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), where in the very first chapter there is an explicit defense of teachings produced by the Buddha's disciples (rather than by the Buddha himself) as taking place "through the Buddha's might" (*buddhānubhavana*) and thus not contradicting the true nature of the Dharma (p. 83). Clearly what is intended here is the defense of scriptures that could not plausibly be attributed to the Buddha himself as representing, in some sense, *buddhavacana*. Likewise in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) the opposition of many Buddhists to this "new teaching" is made explicit in the story of five thousand monks, nuns and lay devotees who walk out of the assembly when the Buddha is about to expound the *Lotus Sūtra* (see H. Kern, trans., *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or the Lotus of the True Law* [1884; rpt. New York: Dover, 1963], p. 38ff.).

98. The assumption that the Buddha's teachings were homogeneous is, from the perspective of the modern scholar, quite striking; this perception of homogeneity was subsequently abandoned, of necessity, in China and Tibet.

99. See Étienne Lamotte, "La critique de l'authenticité dans le bouddhisme," in *India Antiqua* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1947), pp. 213-222. The notion that to be legitimate a Buddhist scripture must have been "heard" from an authorized source has, of course, intriguing parallels with the Hindu concept of *śruti*, parallels which have not (to my knowledge) been fully explored to date. For a more recent discussion of the issue of scriptural authenticity (including an examination of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna perspectives on the issue) see Ronald M. Davidson,

"An Introduction to the Standards of Scriptural Authenticity in Indian Buddhism," in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, pp. 291-325.

100. Even some (though by no means all) tantric texts begin with this formula; see for example the *Hevajra Tantra*, ed. and trans. by David Snellgrove (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), vol. 1, p. 3.

101. Dozens of copies of a Tibetan ST recension, translated either directly from the Chinese or from a Sanskrit ST text but with considerable input from a Chinese version, have been found at Tun-huang. These manuscript copies, now preserved primarily in the Stein (London) and Pelliot (Paris) collections, are the subject of a forthcoming study by John McRae and myself. Cf. above, n. 1.

102. Commentaries attributed to Indian authors but preserved only in Tibetan, and composed during or shortly after the Tibetan Imperial Period (possibly at the request of the Tibetans themselves), include those of Vimalamitra (8th c.), who – though of Indian origin – had studied in China and returned there after his sojourn in Tibet, Kamalaśīla (8th c.), Atiśa (11th century) and Mahājana (11th c.). (The commentaries attributed to the latter two were definitely composed in Tibet, and those of Vimalamitra and Kamalaśīla may have been written there as well, though this is less certain; a fifth commentary, written by Vajrapāṇi [10th-11th century], was composed according to its colophon in Nepal [Lopez, personal communication, 1992].) Following these works there is an apparent hiatus in the composition of commentaries on the *sūtra* in Tibet, after which exegetical activity was resumed in the Ch'ing period. (This statement is based on a personal communication from Donald Lopez [1986], who has been engaged in an active search for Tibetan commentaries on the text. Lopez points out, however, that there may well have existed other commentaries that have not yet come to light [personal communication, 1992].) For a complete listing of canonical references to commentaries by Indian authors preserved in Tibetan see above, n. 94.

103. The passage from which this oft-cited line is taken occurs both in the Vinaya (*Cullavagga*, X, 4) and in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (IV, pp. 280-281), in the context of a discussion between the Buddha and his foster-mother, Mahāpajāpatī. In response to a request by the latter for the "Dharma in a nutshell," the Buddha offers a number of criteria for determining what should and should not be considered his teaching. Each item is first stated negatively (i.e., in terms of what is *not* the Dharma), and then positively as follows:

[Of] whatever teachings (*dharmā*), O Gotami, you can assure yourself "these teachings lead to dispassion (*virāga*), not to passion (*sarāga*); to freedom from bondage (*visaṃyoga*), not to bondage (*saṃyoga*); to decrease [in possessions], not to increase; to few desires, not to many; to contentment, not to discontent to solitude, not to socializing; to exertion, not to indolence; to ease in maintaining oneself, not to difficulty" – indeed you may consider "this is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the teaching of the Teacher (*sasthusāsana*)."

The Buddha's reply thus offers a set of general guidelines for evaluating anything that purports to be the Dharma, while simultaneously undercutting the all-too-human tendency to grasp at a any particular formulation of the Dharma to the exclusion of others (a move which, we might note, serves to counter the notion of a "closed canon" of Buddhist teachings).

104. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 87.

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

a.	摩訶般若波羅蜜經	al.	覺
b.	色不異空	am.	大智度論
c.	盡	an.	非色異空
d.	不生	ao.	陰
e.	不滅	ap.	蓮
f.	不垢	aq.	觀世音
g.	不淨	ar.	觀自在
h.	不增	as.	舍利弗
i.	不減	at.	舍利子
j.	窺基	au.	般若波羅蜜多
k.	圓測	av.	菩薩
l.	開元釋教錄	aw.	菩提薩埵
m.	心經	ax.	多心經
n.	真實不虛	ay.	判教
o.	神	az.	智得
p.	大神咒	ba.	得
q.	咒	bb.	五失
r.	究竟涅槃	bc.	三不易
s.	惠立	bd.	西域記
t.	仁王經	be.	觀自在菩薩恒轉多唎隨心陀羅尼經
u.	大乘起信論	bf.	智通
v.	金剛三昧經	bg.	班鳩古事便覽
w.	道安	bh.	神會
x.	綜理眾經目錄	bi.	貞元新定釋教目錄
y.	僧	bj.	圓照
z.	出三藏記集	bk.	神人
aa.	支謙	bl.	陀羅尼集經
ab.	摩訶般若波羅蜜神咒一卷	bm.	心陀羅尼
ac.	般若波羅蜜神咒一卷	bn.	大方等無想經
ad.	神咒	bo.	東方最勝燈王陀羅尼經
ae.	摩訶般若波羅蜜經	bp.	古今譯經圖紀
af.	摩訶般若波羅蜜	bq.	法成
ag.	方光般若經	br.	心
ah.	光讚經	bs.	明咒
ai.	般若波羅蜜	bt.	蜜
aj.	是空法非過去非未來非現在		
ak.	備壞		

## APPENDIX:

The Core Passage of the *Heart Sūtra* in the Gilgit and Nepalese  
Manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*  
(*Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)

Part of the evidence outlined above in support of the hypothesis that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is a back-translation from the Chinese is that the differences between the core passage of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* and its counterpart in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* can more easily be explained by positing a Chinese intermediary between the two than by positing intra-Indian textual evolution alone. In considering the validity of this hypothesis we are fortunate to have manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* representing not one but two layers of the Indian textual tradition: a Gilgit manuscript dating from perhaps the 6th century CE, and a group of very late Nepalese manuscripts dating from the 19th century. The Nepalese texts, of course, represents only one of many possible descendants of the Gilgit text (or rather, of the original text on which both are ultimately based); there could well have been other versions of the text that have not come down to us in which we might have been able to observe other directions of textual evolution. Nonetheless it is useful to observe that the Nepalese texts – when compared with the much earlier Gilgit version of the same *sūtra* – exhibit none of the wholesale shifts in wording and parts of speech that we see in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. Rather, we see precisely what one would usually expect in a Buddhist text dating from this period: a number of amplifications, derived mainly from the reiteration or more detailed enumeration of items already present in the earlier manuscript. (There are also certain amplifications found in the Gilgit manuscript but not in the Nepalese texts, suggesting that these two groups of texts represent separate lines of descent from a common, and somewhat simpler, ancestor.) There is not a single case – and this is extremely important to emphasize – in which we see any of the specific changes (from verbs to adjectives, from singulars to plurals, or the substitution of one synonym for another) that are reflected in the core of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. Thus while a comparison of the Gilgit manuscript of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* with its Nepalese counterpart is insufficient in and of itself to prove our hypothesis, it provides no evidence whatsoever to the contrary.

Gilgit Manuscript (c. 6th c. CE)

na hi Śāradvatīputra-  
-anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā  
nānya śūnyatānyad rūpaṃ  
[rū]pam eva śūnyatā  
śūnyat(ai)va rūpaṃ  
evam nā(ny)ā vedanānyā śūnyatā

Nepalese Manuscript (c. 19th c. CE)

Śāriputra  
nānyadrūpam anyā śūnyatā  
nānyā śūnyatā anyadrūpam  
rūpam eva śūnyatā  
śūnyataiva rūpam  
nānyā vedanā anyā śūnyatā

nānyā sūnyatā anyā vedanā  
vedanaiva sūnyatā sūnyataiva  
vedanā  
nānyā samjñā nānyā sūnyatā ·  
nānye saṃskārā anye sūnyatā  
nānya vijñānam anyā sūnyatā ·  
nānyāḥ sūnyatānyad vijñānam ·  
vijñānam eva sūnyatā sūnyataiva  
vijñānam ·  
ya Śāradvatīputra sūnyatā  
na sā utpadyate  
na nirudhyate ·  
na saṃkliśyate  
na vyavadāyate ·  
na hīyate  
na vardhate  
nātītā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā  
yā notpadyate na nirudhyate na  
saṃkliśyate na vyavadāyate  
na hīyate na vardhate nātītā  
nānāgatā na pratyutpannāḥ  
na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā  
na samjñā na saṃskārā na  
vijñānam  
na cakṣur na śrotam na ghrāṇam  
na jihvā na kāye na manāḥ  
na rūpaṃ na śabda na gandho na rasa  
na sparśo na dharmāḥ  
(na) tatra skandhā na dhātavo  
nāyatanāni  
na tatra cakṣudhātu na rūpadhātu  
na cakṣuvijñānadhātu  
na (śro)tradhātu na śabdadhātu  
na śrotavijñānadhātu  
na ghrāṇadhātu na gandhadhātu  
na ghrāṇavijñānadhātu  
na jihvadhātu na rasadhātu

nānyā sūnyatā anyā sūnyatā  
nānyā sūnyatā anyā samjñā  
nānye saṃskārā anyā sūnyatā  
nānyad vijñānam anyā sūnyatā  
nānyā sūnyatā anyad vijñānam  
vijñānameva sūnyatā sūnyataiva  
vijñānam  
iti samudayasatyāvavādāḥ  
sūnyatā Śāriputra  
notpadyate  
na nirudhyate  
na saṃkliśyate  
na vyavadāyate  
na hīyate  
na vardhate  
nātītā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā  
yā ca īdrśī  
na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā  
na samjñā na saṃskāra na  
vijñānam  
na pṛthivīdhātu nābdhātu  
na tejodhātu na vāyudhātu  
nākāśadhātuḥ na vijñānadhātuḥ

na jihvavijñānadhātuḥ  
na kāyadhātuḥ na spraṣṭavyadhātuḥ  
na kāyavijñānadhātuḥ  
na manodhātuḥ na dharmadhātuḥ  
na manovijñāna[dhā]tuḥr [sic]  
na tatṛavidyā nāvidyānirodhaḥ  
na saṃskārān na saṃskāranirodhaḥ  
na vijñānaṃ na vijñānanirodhaḥ  
na nāmarūpaṃ na nāmarūpanirodhaḥ  
na satvāyatanam na  
satvāyatananirodhaḥ  
na sparśo (na) sparśananirodhaḥ  
na vedanā na vedanānirodhaḥ  
na ṛṣṇā na ṛṣṇānirodhaḥ  
nopādānaṃ nopādānanirodhaḥ  
na bhavo na bhavanirodhaḥ  
na jāti(r n)a jātinirodhaḥ  
na jarāmaraṇam  
na jarāmarānanirodhaḥ  
na duḥkham na samudayo na nirodho  
na mārgaḥ  
na prāpti nābhisamayaḥ

na jihvavijñānadhātuḥ  
na kāyadhātuḥ na spraṣṭavyadhātuḥ  
na kāyavijñānadhātuḥ  
na manodhātuḥ na dharmadhātuḥ  
na manovijñānadhātuḥ  
nāvidyotpādo nāvidyānirodhaḥ  
na saṃskārotpādo na saṃskāranirodha  
na vijñānotpādo na vijñānanirodha  
na nāmarūpotpādo na nāmarūpanirodha  
na ṣaḍāyatanotpādo na  
ṣaḍāyatananirodha  
na sparśotpādo na sparśanirodha  
na vedanotpādo na vedanānirodha  
na ṛṣṇotpādo na ṛṣṇānirodha  
nopādānotpādo nopādānanirodha  
na bhavotpādo na bhavanirodha  
na jātyutpādo na jātinirodha  
na jarāmarāṇaśokaparidevaduḥkhadaur-  
manasyopāyāśotpādo  
na jarāmarāṇaśokaparidevaduḥkhadaur-  
manasyopāyāśanirodhaḥ  
na duḥkha na samudayo na nirodho  
na mārgo  
na prāptir na abhisamayo